

The Victorian Countryside

Edited by GORDON E. MINGAY

Professor of Agricultural History, University of Kent

This new study, with its predecessor, *The Victorian City*, forms the most complete conspectus available of the Victorian World.

Volume One

(The Land, Agriculture, Country Towns and Country Industries)

0734 5, 9½" x 7½" ins. 91 illustrations £25

Volume Two

(Landed Society, Labouring Life)

0735 3, 9½" x 7½" ins. 81 illustrations £25

The Two Volume Set 0736 1 £40 16 July

Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls

COLIN CUNNINGHAM

The Open University

Dr Cunningham discusses how the town halls were organised and financed, how and why the architects were chosen and the many aspects of municipal architecture.

0723 X, 9½" x 7½" ins. Illustrated with designs, plans and photographs £25 16 July

A History of English Prison Administration

Volume One: 1750-1877

SEAN McCONVILLE

University of Sussex

'A magnificent contribution to prison history'

— Professor Nigel Walker

0694 2 £25 29 June

Theatre at Work

The Story of the National Theatre's Production of Brecht's 'Galileo'

JIM HILEY

'A strong recommendation... it offers you bags of gossip, factual details, amazing statistics and a genuine insight into the extraordinary logistics of a major production. Read it. You won't believe it!' — James Fenton, *Sunday Times*

0815 5 £9.75 Paperback 0859 7 £5.95 11 June

The Performing Arts in Contemporary China

COLIN MACKERRAS

Professor of Asian Studies, Griffith University, Queensland

The overthrow of the 'gang of four' had profound effects in all areas of Chinese society, particularly in the performing arts. This study (which includes the cinema) aims to provide a deeper insight into Chinese ideas and aspirations, both cultural and political.

0778 7 £13.60 9 July

The History of Albania

From its Origins to the Present Day

STEFANO POLLO and ARBEN PUTO

With the collaboration of Kristo Frasheri and Skander Anemali
English translation by Carol Wiseman and Ginnie Hale
The first history to be written of Albania by Albanian historians, using sources not available to Western writers.

0365 X £18.95 9 July

From Descartes to Wittgenstein

A Short History of Modern Philosophy

ROGER SCRUTON

Reader in Philosophy, Birkbeck College

This survey, written for the common reader, concentrates on the arguments and conclusions of the principal modern philosophers.

0798 1 £9.50 9 July

Wittgenstein: to Follow a Rule

Edited by STEVEN H. HOLTZMAN and CHRISTOPHER M. LEICH

Contributors: Gordon Bakker, Christopher Peacocke, Crispin Wright, Gareth Evans, John McDowell, Simon Blackburn, Charles Taylor and Philip Pettit.

0760 4 £12.50 16 July

Red Sea Coral Reefs

GUNNAR BEMERT and RUPERT ORMOND

A professional photographer and a research biologist introduce the reader to the fascinating and splendid world of the undersea world in Saudi Arabia. A book of dazzling beauty.

07103 0007 7, 11 x 8½ ins. 180 full-colour plates £26 28 May

The new novel from the author of Sam Chard

Long Day at Shiloh

DON BANNISTER

A recreation of the first twenty-four hours of one of the crucial battles of the American Civil War... his command of historical detail and uncanny ability to get inside his characters make this an unforgettable and sometimes harrowing book. — John Niekirk, *The Times*

0727 2 £8.95 25 June

ISBN Prefix: 0 7100

Routledge & Kegan Paul, 39 Store Street, London WC1

RKP

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

JULY 24 1981

contents

MICHAEL IRWIN	Czeslaw Milosz: <i>The Issa Valley</i> . Native Realm. Bells in Winter.	827
VICTORIA GLENHANNING	Jiri Furdendurg: <i>Young at Any Age</i>	
PHYLLIS WILLMOTT	L. J. Ludovick: <i>Cosmetic Scalpel</i> Mory Slott: <i>Ageing for Beginners</i>	828
ROBERT HERNARD MARTIN	Raymona E. Hull: <i>Nathaniel Hawthorne</i>	
GEOFFREY CARNALL	A. D. Hurvey: <i>English Literature and the Great War with France</i>	829
ANNE DUCHENE	Fiction	
PATRICIA CRAIG	Catherline Cookson: <i>The Mary Ann Omnibus</i>	
RICHARD BROWN	Margaret Forster: <i>Marlitt Rites</i> Helga Moray: <i>Sunny Days</i>	830
PETER FAWCETT	Volery Larham/Marcel Ray: <i>Correspondance 1899-1937</i>	831
DENIS DONOGHUE	G. H. Bantock: <i>The parochialism of the present - Contemporary issues in education</i>	
CHARLES MADGE	Paul Lawless: <i>Britain's Inner Cities - Problems and Policies</i>	832
JANET ADAM SMITH	Christina Bewley: <i>Muir of Huntershill</i>	833
ROSEMARY DINNAOE	Elizabeth Hay: <i>Sambo Sahib</i>	
NESTA ROBERTS	Naomi Mitchison: <i>Mucking Around</i>	834
HUGH LLOYD-JONES	M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern: <i>Nietzsche on Tragedy</i>	
PATRICK BOWLES	Dominique Fernandez: <i>Signor Giovanni</i>	835
TANYA HARROD	Commentary	
ROBERT HEWSON	Meninsky (Museum of Modern Art, Oxford) Brian Clarke: an exhibition at the RIBA and a book on his work by Martin Harrison	836
	Children's books	837-44
INGA-STINA EWBANK	Commentary	
R. V. HOLDSWORTH	A Doll's House (The Other Place, Stratford)	
HILARY SPURLING	Eastward Ho! (Mermaid Theatre)	
JULIE CURTIS	Jean Rhys's Quartet on film (various cinemas)	
RICHARD OSBORNE	Gogol: <i>Marriage</i> (BBC TV) Michael Nyman and Harrison Birtwistle: Down by the Greenwood (Colloquial Theatre)	845-46
	To the Editor	
	Information, please	847
GORDON BROTHERSTON	Fiction	
ALAN BOLD	Gary Jennings: <i>Aztec</i>	
SALLY RAMSEY	James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassie Gibbon): The Thirteenth Disciple	
PETER NORMAN	Barbara Hanrahan: <i>The Frangipani Gardens</i> Raymond Kennedy: <i>Columbine</i>	848
ROGER OARFITT	Ted Hughes: <i>Under the North Star</i> Terry Gliford and Neil Roberts: <i>Ted Hughes - A Critical Study</i> Ekbert Faas: <i>Ted Hughes - The Unaccommodated Universe</i> Stuart Hirschberg: <i>Myth to the Poetry of Ted Hughes</i> The City of Oil (poem)	
PETER REDOROVE	Carroll F. Terrell (Editor): <i>Basel Bunting</i>	
FLEUR ADCOCK	The Gregory Awards 1980: <i>Poems Selected</i> by Peter Porter and Howard Sergeant	849-50
FRANCES SPALDING	Marco Livingstone: <i>David Hockney</i>	
JEAN WILSON	Robert B. Packer and Harry T. Moore: <i>D. H. Lawrence - The Man Who Lived</i>	851
RODERICK BEATON	Gail Holst: <i>Theodorakis - Myth and Politics to Modern Greek Music</i>	
GERALD ABRAHAM	Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: <i>Letters to his Family - An Autobiography</i>	
WILFRID MELLERS	John Dowland: <i>The Complete Works of John Dowland</i>	852
D. K. FIELDHOUSE	Angus Calder: <i>Revolutionary Empire</i>	
PHILIP MASON	James Lunt: <i>Imperial Sunset - Frontier Soldiering in the 20th Century</i>	853
JOHN COVENTRY	Robert Nowell: <i>A Passion for Truth - Hans Kung, a biography</i>	
ALBERIC STACPOOLE	Roderick Strange: <i>Newman and the Gospel of Christ</i>	
SARAH COAKLEY	Mary Clare: <i>Encountering the Depths</i> Donald Nichol: <i>Holliness</i>	854
HAROLD HOBSON	Commentary	
RICHARD COMBS	Ken Campbell: <i>War with the Newts</i> (Riverdale Studios)	
STODDARD MARTIN	Blake Edwards's film: <i>S.O.B.</i> (Leicester Square Cinema)	
ROBERT HALSBAND	Amlyn Gray: <i>How I Got That Story</i> (Hampstead Theatre) The Anglo-American Conference of Historians	855

LITERATURE

Across the dark era

By Michael Irwin

CZESLAW MILOSZ:

The Issa Valley

Translated by Louis Iriharne

288pp. Sidgwick and Jackson/Carcant New Press. £6.95.

0 283 98762 6

Native Realm

A Search for Self-Definition

Translated by Catherine S. Leach

300pp. Sidgwick and Jackson/Carcant New Press. £8.95.

0 283 98782 0

Bells in Winter

Translated by the author and Lillian Wallace

71pp. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. £2.95.

0 85635 290 X

It is to be hoped that the author's Nobel Prize and the significance of current events in Poland will help to win for these books the response they deserve. Milosz has lived through, and participated in, some of the crucial political happenings of our century. If he had never written a line he would be an intriguing figure merely by virtue of his survival. Since he in fact brought to bear upon his experiences a refined and resilient analytical intelligence, unusually combined with a poet's sensibility, his testimony is of unique importance. Attention must be paid to such a man.

He was born in Lithuania in 1911 and baptized a Catholic. His father, a civil engineer mobilized to build roads and bridges for the Russian army, led a nomadic existence that took the family at one stage almost to the Chinese border. They were in Rjev, near the Volga, when the Revolution began, had moved to Estonia by the time the Germans arrived, and eventually settled in Wilno, soon to become a Polish city. Milosz went to a Catholic school there, and later to the University, where he took a master's degree in law and became the youngest member of an influential literary coterie that founded its own review. His first volume of poems was published in 1933, a second in 1936. In the interim he had spent a year in Paris on a scholarship. After graduating he worked for Polish Radio, first in Wilno and then in Warsaw. He lived in the capital for most of the war, nominally working in the University library, while writing, translating and editing for the underground press, and supplementing his starvation wages by black-market dealings. By a series of chances he survived the Warsaw rising and the reprisals that reduced the city to rubble. After the war he worked for several years as Secretary of the Polish Embassy in Washington, but in 1951 he broke with his government and went to Paris, where he eked out a living as a freelance writer. In 1960 he moved to the United States, to become Professor of Slavic Literatures at Berkeley. His work was banned in Poland in the years following his original departure, enjoyed a great revival in 1956, but was banned again a year or two later. It was a sign of the times that his Nobel Prize could be officially celebrated in his own country.

The Issa Valley is a particularly revealing work in that it displays the intuitions, the doubts and the beliefs that were to shape the author's political thinking, but displays them in a largely apolitical context. It is a story woven loosely from the experiences of a young boy named Thomas, who is living with his grandparents in a remote Lithuanian village. It has the sensuousness and immediacy one associates with novels apparently inspired by the writer's own childhood recollections: *David Copperfield* and *The Mill on the Floss* both come to mind. Like Dickens and Eliot, Milosz has the problem of deriving breadth of meaning from material that might seem too narrowly personal. His solution is to shift recurrently the focus of attention from Thomas to various of his acquaintances in the locality. The theme of the novel is the attempt, by all these characters, to make sense of the natural life they see around them, and to deduce from it a coherent philosophy to regulate their own actions. As in Hardy's fiction the copious passages of vivid description are not included to provide "background": they are central to the author's purpose. When Thomas sees a grouse shot, or traps a snake, or skins a bird, or visits the apary, his reactions help to mould his developing and sometimes despairing view of the world. Is Man essentially an animal being? Do his sufferings signify no more than those of a hare? It is not only Thomas who is tormented by such questions. One of the local peasants is driven to challenge God's existence with experiments in suicide. A farmer is trapped into murdering his own child. In a Hardy novel such melodramatic things, magnified variants of the melodrama everywhere visible in nature, are

absent from the work - we have no conception of his social character; impressive in the consistent refusal to sentimentalize. "The immensity of events calls for restraint, even dryness", he remarks at the beginning of his chapter about the first year of the war. Elsewhere, skipping a year or two, he mentions that "various personal complications" have been left out of account. But the reticence is more significant than these comments imply. It relates directly to the dualism which informed *The Issa Valley* and which is crucial to Milosz's history of his philosophical and political development.

In a fascinating chapter called "Catholic Education" he describes the schoolboy Milosz as virtually a Manichaeist. Since our mortal nature "we should sin out of spite", salvaging the positive by means of the negative. Then and later he found



Czeslaw Milosz

likely to constitute the substance of the story. In *The Issa Valley* they are muted, almost incidental, because the writer is more rigorously concerned with ideas. For all its beauty the Valley is "inhabited by an unusually large number of devils", devils that can betray the human residents and plunge them into hopelessness or dread. People act irrationally, commit crimes that were never intended, the root cause being "the discordance between body and soul". Milosz is everywhere a dualist, dramatizing the antagonism between the self that thinks and the self that feels, between the performing body and the observing mind.

One consequence of this approach is a fruitful duality in the novel itself, an alternation between sensuously evocative episodes and various modes of questioning or reflection. Even in English this is a work of stylistic distinction. The translator has managed to capture the poetic precision of Milosz's vocabulary while achieving an appropriate expressiveness of sound and rhythm: "To wake to a bright babble of birds, first invading his sleep, then growing stronger, the sun blazing through shingles alive with the scratching of tiny claws, the flutter of feathers..." *The Issa Valley* is not only an impressive but an immediately appealing novel.

Native Realm seems, at first glance, to have little in common with the tenderness, simplicity, and descriptive richness of this story of childhood. Subtitled "A Search for Self-Definition", it is much more obviously a product of the Milosz who wrote *The Captive Mind*. In a series of essays, very loosely chronological, he describes, and meditates upon, various of his past experiences, providing, as it were, a set of commentaries upon his improbable career. Throughout he maintains a curious austerity, even impersonality, that is both frustrating and impressive: frustrating in that Milosz himself

is absent from the work - we have no conception of his social character; impressive in the consistent refusal to sentimentalize. "The immensity of events calls for restraint, even dryness", he remarks at the beginning of his chapter about the first year of the war. Elsewhere, skipping a year or two, he mentions that "various personal complications" have been left out of account. But the reticence is more significant than these comments imply. It relates directly to the dualism which informed *The Issa Valley* and which is crucial to Milosz's history of his philosophical and political development.

This precarious creed could not survive his visit to the Poland of 1949: "ordinary human despair must be given its just due". But Milosz deserted his country reluctantly, and at the expense of great moral and psychological pain. He found no simple solutions in the West. Like *The Captive Mind*, *Native Realm* makes uncomfortable reading because it defines, with elegant precision, a dilemma which most Western readers have had the luxury of shuffling. Thomas Hardy's work seems sympathetic today partly for what is called its pessimism - the inference being that pessimism of this sort isn't (after all) hopelessly disagreeable. It becomes a philosophical lay-by where one can pull in to watch the world go past. But what if the pressures of history and geography compel you to keep moving? What if you are obliged to choose between a back any residual trust in evolutionary meliorism with moral capital? In making his wager, in striving to turn his pessimism to positive account, Milosz was a representative figure of our times. The schizophrenic he explored is a condition of twentieth-century life.

A review cannot contain the quotations and detailed analysis that would be necessary to an adequate account of the poems assembled in *Bells in Winter*. But the collection reveals a range, authority and (even in translation) a command of vocabulary, cadence and tone appropriate to a major poet. No single work could represent so diverse a group, but "The Fall" shows how Milosz's unobtrusive control of metaphor can make an apparently simple poem ditte upon successive readings:

The death of a man is like the fall of a mighty nation
That had valiant armies, captains and prophets,
And wealthy ponds and ships over all the seas.
But now it will not relieve any besieged city.
It will not enter into any alliance.
Because its cities are empty, its population dispersed.
Its land once bringing harvest is overgrown with thistles,
Its mission forgotten, its language lost.
The dialect of a village high upon inaccessible mountains.

What must strike anyone who reads these three volumes successively is the interconcoctedness, the homogeneity of Milosz's achievement: one work elucidates another. It would be good for us to have his complete oeuvre available in English.

Gore Vidal

CREATION

"This new novel represents a significant development in the range of Vidal's art."

The Sunday Times

Wilbur Smith

MEN OF MEN

"It is as rare as most of his other novels a most splendid read."

Financial Times

Nicolas

Freeling

ONE DAMN THING AFTER ANOTHER
"Quirky, colloquial, hallucinatory, unmistakable Freeling."

The Sunday Times

Ian St. James

THE BALFOUR

CONSPIRACY
"The authentic stamp of a born storyteller."

The Observer

Richard

Herley

THE FLINT LORD
"A well researched and remarkable novel."

The Daily Telegraph

Mike

Tomkies

BETWEEN EARTH AND PARADISE
"There is a kind of Defoe quality to Mr Tomkies' writing."

Ian Niall

William

T. Stearn

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AT SOUTH KENSINGTON
"A comprehensive scholarly account... well organised, accurate, judiciously fair and humane..."

New Scientist

Martin

Gilbert

WINSTON
S. CHURCHILL
Companion Volume V
Part 2
The Wilderness Years
"It is impossible to praise too highly Martin Gilbert's impeccable industry and imaginative treatment of this massive material."

Contemporary Review

Heinemann

Best face forward

By Victoria Glendinning

IRA FUERNBERG:

Young at Any Age
Thirty-Three of the World's Most
Elegant Women Reveal How They
Stay Beautiful.

186pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£7.95.
0 297 77921 4

L.J. LUDOVICI:

Cosmetic Scalp
The Life of Charles Willi, Beauty
Surgeon.

140pp. Bradford-on-Avon, Wilt:
Mountraker Press. £6.95.
0 239 00210 5

Princess Ira von Furstenberg, who interviewed thirty-three women for *Young at Any Age*, writes that her attitude to her own looks "changed radically" when she reached forty. "Suddenly I realized that many young men found older women fascinating. Her personal claim to fame, she says, is twofold: her marriage to Prince Alfonso of Hohenlohe-Langenburg at the age of fifteen, and my achievement in the field of narcissism."

Her book is compiled for the benefit of others in the narcissist field - and there will be a host of golden photographs, since it's no good pretending that it would not be very nice to look as beautiful as some of these famous women look in their photographs. They are all past their first youth and some past their last youth too. Yet they all had good looks to start with, or extraordinary looks (one or two are hideous), and whatever their other gifts their faces have been their fortunes. For Princess Michael of Kent, All MacGraw, Farrah Fawcett, Natalie Wood, it is merely a matter of protecting their capital against erosion. The effort is only worthwhile if the initial investment was considerable, and in any case there is little for the small investor to learn since the beauty recipes and superstitious rituals described here are so contradictory. It is like reading the clinical case histories of patients suffering from obsessions.

Bianca Jagger and several others recommend drinking a mystical eight glasses of water a day, though this surely has no result other than that which a plunger could have foreseen. Some recommend a regime whose expense would cover a small nation's defence programme, and specific beauticians (spoken of with reverence, like gurus) and products get free testimonials, in particular "Oil of Olay" (sic, whenever cited). Not all their speculations have paid off. Twenty needles injected simultaneously into Princess Ira's bottom to combat cellulite turned out to be "excruciatingly (sic) painful and a complete waste of time". The film actress Marthe Keller finds it worthwhile however to have her hair washed in eggs, watercress and bone-marrow, while Lilli Palmer concentrates on her teeth, since they are "the soul of the face".

Lady Diana Cooper keeps her mink on twenty-four hours a day; Sir Phillips "would rather die" than go to bed before cleaning her face. Some take exercise, some take lovers, some take vitamin pills. Some spend money and bone-marrow, while Lilli Palmer concentrates on her teeth, since they are "the soul of the face".

A revised, enlarged and up-dated edition of the *Dictionary of Medical Ethics*, edited by A. B. Dunne, G. R. Dunstan and E. B. Weibourn. Originally published in 1977, has recently appeared (Dutton, London and Todd, 459pp, £12.50, 0 232 51492 5). 148 contributors have written on the ethical implications of topics in medicine ranging from "Abortion" to a "Warning on Self-Medication" and the World Medical Association, covering on the way: Cloning, "Mutilation" and Torture, among others, less alarming and dealing with a number of issues and methods with which most people are now familiar, from newspapers and television. It is not from experience, nonpunctuated, artificial, sensational, cosmetic surgery.

Dailey. The most total in fact of them all is Diana Vreeland of *Vogue*; but then, as she remarks, "I'm just not fascinated by natural people".

Grace Bumbury, for all her "dedication to her look", is disconcertingly natural. "Her only skin has a tendency towards acne" - and she makes a further intimate confidence to Princess Ira: of an even more unglamorous nature. But the only people who would not play up to the Princess at all were two ex-models, Jean Shrimpton and Baroness Figma Thyssen, and the French editor and politician Françoise Giroud, who describes herself as "a sort of jeep" and insisted on talking about the importance of financial independence for women. The Princess was stung by Jean Shrimpton, now running a hotel in Penzance and "probably less involved with her physical self than any woman I've ever met", and impressed by Figma Thyssen as "a woman at peace with herself". (These three all have streaky hair, quite a lot of wrinkles, no make-up to speak of, and are beautiful, as they always were.)

There is nothing immoral or shameful in making your self into a work of art. It is the desire to match reality to self-image that drives narcissists to cosmetic surgeons and other professionals. As Lady Antonia Fraser so aptly puts it, "As Descartes so aptly puts it, I think blunder therefore I am." Some of the dedicated women in this book must have undergone cosmetic surgery but they are keeping quiet about it, although they are happy to discuss the relative merits of face-lifts and silicone injections. Lady Antonia gravely says, "I respect women who make that decision". But if she herself were to resort to surgery she would tell no one. "It would seem like such a waste of money".

It takes not only a lot of money but a sort of idiot courage. No one who saw the recent BBC television documentary, *Facelift*, will ever forget the moment when the cosmetic surgeon peeled back the skin from the face of his anaesthetized patient to reveal the raw blood, bone and tissue beneath: a rabbit's skull in a butcher's shop, one would have said. Then he replaced the skin tidily, stretching it as required, like rolled-out pastry over a meat pie. Nor was it reassuring to see a surgeon voraciously stuffing a bulging polythene bag of liquid silicone into a slit in a woman's breast. But thousands every year submit themselves to these horrors. It is a matter, as a Scottish doctor in the programme said, of "dealing with an obsession by surgery". One clinic gets up to a hundred enquiries a day. Rhinoplasty (a nose job) or mammoplasty will cost over £1,000. There is a great deal of money to be made.

One man who became "a millionaire in any emergency" through cosmetic surgery was Karl Heinrich Willi, who died in 1972 at the age of eighty-eight. He was a Swiss who practised in London, and his life has been written by L. J. Ludovici - or half-written, since Willi is wrapped in mystery. Ludovici is frequently reduced to paragraphs of hectic rhetorical questions. But the half-story is sufficiently extraordinary. Willi had no medical qualifications at all (in 1921 he was prosecuted for falsely using the title of doctor) but achieved such eminence that plastic surgeons of the calibre of Sir Harold Gillies and Sir Archibald McIndoe came to watch him. He pioneered the technique of operating from the nose from inside; he was also the first to use a "radio needle" (though he used antique methods too when it suited him - such as applying leeches to disperse haematoma, in the days be-

fore silicone, he used the patient's own fat, taken from the stomach, to inject into patches under the facial skin and fill them out.

How he acquired his skills is unknown, though in his early days he practised on pigs' heads bought from Smithfield. He came to England just before the First World War, and started practising - in both senses - in a flat over Bumpus's bookshop in Oxford Street. Between the wars he was probably the only man in the country doing himself entirely to cosmetic surgery, and by 1930 was rich enough to buy himself a large house in Eton Avenue, Hampstead, where he became very grand and even more expensive. He wrote books, at least one of which, *The Face* (1955), did very well.

Willi had a personality that inspired confidence: he saw himself as Pygmalion. (A certain Lady Thompson had ten facelifts by him, which must have cost her a fortune.) Perhaps he made a lot of people happy. But in private life his personality was less genial. As a very young man he had married a girl called Marie Muff, an assistant in a Lucerne department store, and in his Eton Avenue heyday Marie Muff got a very raw deal indeed. Willi's mistress lived in a flat in the grounds, and he told a friend: "My wife is far from ideal, you understand; she is in all respects a little woman, whereas I'm a man of vast horizons." When they went back to Switzerland together for a family funeral the man of vast horizons stayed at the Palace Hotel, and Marie Muff had a room in a temperance boarding-house.

Willi retired in 1960, and absolutely nothing has happened since then in the field of cosmetic surgery. Mr Ludovici says, to out-date his work other than the "expected advances in surgical techniques". Cosmetic surgery has in recent years grown much more respectable; yet the fortunes to be made out of "dealing with an obsession by surgery" mean that there are plenty of quacks, cowboys and incompetents around, especially since institutes of cosmetic surgery have begun to advertise in popular magazines. As Mr Ludovici writes, "Cosmetic plastic surgery since Willi's day is being aired more, publicized widely. But this does not mean that its advertisers all possess the skills or the perfectionist outlook of a Willi, a great emperor." Beware the men of vast horizons - the men of lost horizons, peddling Shangri-la.

The declining years

By Phyllis Willmott

MARY STOTT:
Aging for Beginners
214pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £7.95
(paperback, £2.25).
0 631 11591 9

Growing old is a commonplace experience, part of the normal process of living. But these days it is like a number of other experiences; it is likely to be turned into a "problem", taken over by experts. *Aging for Beginners* is the first in a series of *Understanding Every-day Experiences* which aims to reclaim such experiences from the world of the "problem" and make them more manageable than they have come to be seen as being.

From the enviable position of having "no conscious fear" of the decrepitude that age can bring, Mary Stott, former feature writer on the *Guardian* and now vigorous septuagenarian, sets out to convince us that those in late middle age and those near to retirement could be frightening themselves unnecessarily.

Her approach is unusual; she has made the book both a personal testimony of the potential of old age and a compendium of practical advice and old. Throughout, she draws on her own experiences, both past and present.

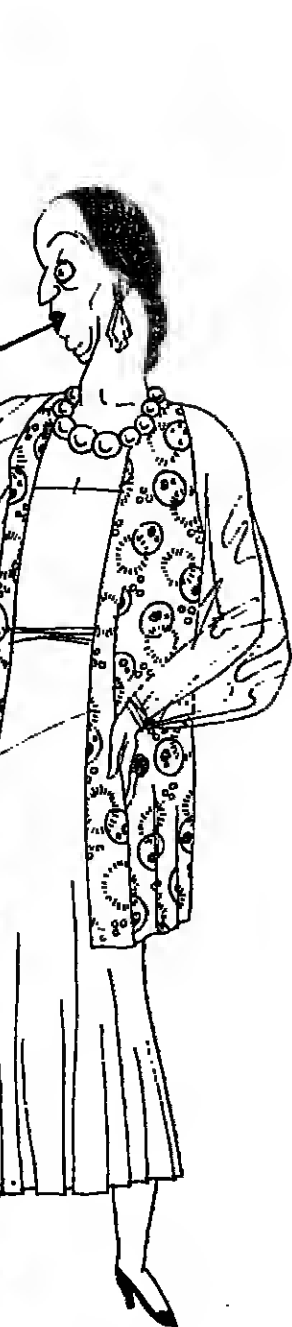
For example, in a chapter on the enrichment that hobbies can bring, she reflects at some length on the origins of her own interest in singing (as a little girl she sang for her grandmother) and how she lost this and then rediscovered

it in retirement. Similarly, in support of the pleasures to be gained from travel in later life, she recounts some of her adventures, including a recent trip to China where she spent her seventy-first birthday.

Preparing this book clearly took the indefatigable explorer and her "itchy feet" on journeying of a different kind nearer home. She visited sheltered housing and residential homes, she talked with directors of organizations for the elderly and trade union leaders, and she researched into the history of residential care and fixed retirement ages. All this and more she weaves into the book, along with her own reflections and comments. At times it is almost as if one is not so much reading as listening in the way that one does with an old friend.

This familiar and easy style enables the author to make digestible (and, helped by an index, retrievable), an impressive amount of advice and information that in less skilled hands could seem dreary. An early chapter gives sensible advice about moving in the retirement years and the pitfalls to be avoided. Another chapter looks at how to make the best of family ties, as well as how to manage if you have none. Other more tricky subjects discussed are the need for sex and the right to end life. On both, the author's views are controversial, but on the second (euthanasia) recent events suggest that the matter is more difficult to get right than she believes.

Another contentious issue given a relatively long airing is that of the right to work beyond normal retirement age. Mary Stott makes a spirited defence of the need for a flexible retirement age somewhere between sixty and seventy. A flexible retire-



The lady reading Bilge by "Dotti" is one of a series of ninety-nine pen and ink drawings by Nicholas Bentley, illustrating J. D. Mortimer's "1933 and Still Going Wrong", to be included in a new English Illustrated and Private Press Books and Related Drawings at Sotheby's, New Bond Street, London W1 on Friday July 31.

ment age is obviously a good thing; but with jobs disappearing and youth unemployment rising at the present rates the case for a lowering of retirement age is stronger than that for raising it. It could be argued that the earlier the age of retirement the more difficult it will become to associate retirement (or just not working) with being old - and finished. And if anyone is to give up work gracefully it must surely begin with those who have had their fair share of it.

In the final chapter Mary Stott tackles the problems of real old age - the time when decrepitude takes over. She does her best to face the possible horrors in store at the end of life. Her emphasis is on "what can be done to make the best of it. Here she too easily assumes that the decrepit old are likely to think and act as she would now, fit and well. "Better to die quickly by one's own will", she says, "than to linger, neglected, despised, resented and disliked." The problem is that even in unhappy old age this is by no means everyone's choice. Some do indeed want to linger, and some (the senile) do not know they are; it is other people who most often would prefer that the old did not survive too long. This is the old age which is to be feared.

Even so, Mary Stott is surely right to take the positive line that she does, which no doubt springs from her own enjoyment of living. Growing old is an experience to which there is, for most of us, no acceptable alternative. Fortunately, more of us than in the past are likely to reach old age fit enough, and "young" enough to make the most of it. With Mary Stott's help, we will be rather better equipped to do so.

RAYMONA E. HULL:

Nathaniel Hawthorne
The English Experience, 1853-1864
307pp. University of Pittsburgh Press.
\$21.95.
0 8229 3418 3

On July 6, 1853, Nathaniel Hawthorne set sail with his family for Liverpool aboard the Cunard liner Niagara and for seven years did not return to the United States. Most of his best work was already written, and at forty-nine he was a mild international celebrity; but it was not primarily literature that drew him to England. Instead, he was about to begin a four-year consularship, his reward for writing a huck campaign biography of his old friend Franklin Pierce, who on his inauguration to the Presidency appointed Hawthorne to what was generally considered the most suitable foreign post with a high income.

Hawthorne's family expenses had been constantly mounting, and he knew he would soon need to provide a costly education for three children. Most of the income from the Liverpool consularship came from fees for signing invoices on vessels departing for the United States, and he believed that he could make ten times the \$1,000 a year on which he had been living. With only moderate effort he ought to make himself financially independent for life; in what he confidently expected to be a good bit of spare time, he would write a romance with an English setting.

As it turned out, the consularship was excessively hard work and honing beyond Hawthorne's worst expectations. He hated the claims on his help made by "brutal ship masters, drunken sailors, vagrant Yankees, mad people, sick people, and dead people". The formal entertainments were scarcely less irritating: he shirked giving them himself and disliked attending those at which he was an honoured guest. By the end of his first year he was kept from resigning only by his hope of saving at least \$30,000 in four years. Halfway through his stay the fee system was replaced by the payment of flat salaries to consuls, in Hawthorne's case, \$7,500. Gradually he came to the realization that with heavy expenses he would be lucky to be much better off financially than he had been from his writing.

The shortage of money inevitably meant that the Hawthorne children could not get the excellent education their father had hoped to provide for them in England, and had to be taught at home by their parents and a series of unsatisfactory nursemaids and governesses. Nor were the family able to travel extensively, as they had planned, although they did manage a long stay in Italy after the completion of the four years in Liverpool.

Like many other New Englanders, Hawthorne had always thought of England as "the old home", a belief so strong that on arrival he felt he had been there before: "the illusion was often so powerful, that almost anyone might not be a sort of innate idea, the print of a recollection in some ancestral mind, transmitted with fainter and fainter impress through several descents, to my own". By the time he had been in the country two years, his disappointments had so embittered him that he began fostering his disillusionment on to his alien surroundings: "I HATE England; though I love some Englishmen, and like them generally, in fact." The tepidity of his affections was indicated by those two words, "in fact", and a franker statement was his remark that "An American is not very apt to love the English people, as a whole, on whatever length of acquaintance".

Not that the fault was all his. As many travellers in both Hawthorne's century and our own have discovered, the English could be unbearably condescending about American institutions and behaviour, their information chiefly derived from Mrs Trollope or Dickens, two writers whom they would never have looked to for documentation about the domestic manners of the

English. And their customary acceptance of Hawthorne as an unusual exception to the crudeness of his countrymen was, if anything, even more infuriating. He got along well with men like Richard Monckton Milnes or Lord Stanley, but he knew that he was better educated, better mannered, better bred than most of the English with whom he was thrown in the course of his duties, which made their patronizing doubly unwelcome. Yet, when he dealt with the Americans who had business at the Consulate, they seemed everything the English had always assumed they were. Even his beloved wife Sophia was sometimes vulgar in her admiration of the luxury of the houses they visited and the splendour of the English women's dresses. Once he was actually on the Continent, both England and America seemed Paradise. "I doubt whether English cookery, for the very reason that it is so gross, is not better for man's moral and spiritual nature, than that you are gratifying your coarsest animal needs and propensities, and are duly ashamed of it."

Like any good tourist, Hawthorne loved a picturesque village, a gloomy cathedral, or best of all a ruin, but he seems in large part to have been curiously unperceptive visually. In a conscientious attempt to remedy this defect he moved to Manchester in 1857 for seven weeks to study the contents of the Great Exhibition as preparation for life in Italy. He hated the destructive effects of Puritanism, while he retained many of its prejudices, in particular that towards nudity in art. "The most disagreeable of English painters is Etty, who had a diseased appetite for woman's flesh, and spent his whole life, apparently, in painting them with enormously developed bosoms and buttocks. I do not mind nudity, in a modest and natural way, but Etty's women really thrust their nakedness upon you so with malice aforethought, and especially so enhance their posterior, that one feels inclined to kick them." Sculpture had better penish, he thought, than depend upon the undraped body.

Unhappy and uncomfortable as he was in England, his situation might have been marvellously fruitful had he been a writer of social comment. It is fascinating to think what James would have made of being similarly thrust among so many self-satisfied vulgarisms. Instead, Hawthorne quietly stopped writing romance and turned to keeping notes of his impressions, intending to mine them for notes themselves. Randall Stewart, who published the first complete edition of *The English Notebooks* some forty years ago, quite properly called the entire 300,000 words "perhaps the fullest and richest book ever written by an American about England", which is surely more than a fair trade for another *Bleakdale Romance*.

Occasionally in the *Notebooks* Hawthorne seems merely to be marking time, copying down standard reactions, as if in preparation for a tourist's guidebook, but usually his observations are shrewd, often tartly amusing. Accustomed to the well-fed wives of Northern manufacturers, he noted with an Etty-like eye that English women were "massive, not seemingly with pure fat, but with solid beef, making an awful ponderosity of frame. You think of them as composed of sirloins, and with broad and thick steaks on Martin Tupper and his wife, he noticed wryly that they ate "their ice-creams in a most loving and conjugal fashion, putting their spoons, at pleasure, each into the other's glass." Nor did he spare himself or his countrymen: "There certainly is something in royalty, and the institutions connected therewith, that turns the Republican brain."

In spite of their hundreds of brilliant pages, the *Notebooks* have been of less use to biographers than might be hoped. For one thing, Hawthorne wrote seamlessly, to what film-makers call long takes, with the idea that his impression of a single scene or locality might later be written up as an essay with little change; the result is that they

are not easily quotable. More fundamentally, they are difficult to use in biography because Hawthorne revealed so little of himself. A great deal of his personality can be inferred from his attitudes towards others, but he was personally reticent. The frontispiece of *Nathaniel Hawthorne, The English Experience* shows a handsome and intelligent face with faintly amused eyes that regard the world without giving much away. What lay behind that urbanely quizzical glance remains a deliberate mystery.

We may have to wait a long time for a biography that satisfactorily blends his daily life, the landscape of his psyche and the works he wrote. For all its stately, superbly informed thoroughness about the events of Hawthorne's life, Arlin Turner's recent biography leaves the reader uncertain whether there was an actual, imaginative man behind all that detail, let alone one capable of the chiaroscuro of *The Scarlet Letter*. As Larzer Ziff has written in these pages, Turner was concerned "with interpreting psychologically the facts on the record", not with being much interested in "the connection of the life to the letters". Frederick Crews's brilliant study of the works judiciously not a biography in the usual sense; it interprets the books in the light of Hawthorne's psyche, naming it not always illuminating his nervousness, but the life of which he writes was the interior one, and in spite of his admissions to biographers, at the end of his exciting essay we still feel that there was perhaps more connection than he suggests between Hawthorne's exterior life and his writings.

Confronted with these two extremes, Raymona E. Hull chooses that of Turner. She is even less concerned than he with Hawthorne's writing, focusing on the documentation of his wanderings in England and Italy, so that the reader initially feels apprehensively that she may be doing nothing but annotating the *Notebooks*. It is surely true, as she claims, that Hawthorne's life in England has been

neglected: Turner, for example, has nearly a hundred pages on the period included in this book. But besides the diaries and journals, Mrs Hawthorne's letters, and various other scattered material, Professor Hull has been able to use the results of her own delightful, single-minded tracking down of the many places in which the Hawthornes lived for seven years. What interests her is physical detail rather than conjecture or even ordering of events. The result is not intellectual history, but in spite of its clearly uninviting sub-title, the book is a vivid account of what it must have been like to live as a nominal in nineteenth-century England and Italy.

It is hard to think of another single book where it is possible to find out more about nineteenth-century rents, ferry costs, the mean economies of boarding-house keepers, what was provided in lodging-houses, the peccadilloes of servants, the pictures on the walls of rented rooms, menus, even the names of the intermediate stations at which one changed on railway journeys. Generally, it must have been a miserable and fatiguing life, and it inevitably makes the reader wonder why so many thousands of people seem to have chosen to live that way.

A handsome furnished house outside Liverpool usually cost £200 annually, although the rent was reduced for Hawthorne to £160 once the landlady discovered that he was a person of some consequence. Even so it seemed expensive, and eventually the Hawthornes moved to a lodging-house where bedrooms were lit by oil lamps and each room had a sitting room with shabby furniture and cost 12s 6d weekly. Since guests had to provide their own food and necessities "even to the candles you burn, and the soap on your washstands", Hawthorne called the English lodging-house "a contrivance for carrying the domestic cares of home about with you". There were, however, what seem today like compensations: a turtle and venison dinner for ten, with sherry, punch, huck, claret,

champagne, moselle, port, liqueurs, madeira, brandy, and cigars, cost only 12s 10s at a good hotel, including bed and breakfast for the understandably exhausted guests. In Florence the Hawthornes took apartments on the *piano nobile* of a house, including terrace, garden, seventeen rooms, and luxurious furnishings, for which they paid £10 a month.

This is, in the best sense, a very modestly written book, with no hint of the writer's personality save her uncontrollable enthusiasm for Hawthorne and her delight in following his tracks. At its conclusion the reader perhaps understands little more about what was ticking over behind that enigmatic mask, but we can appreciate something of the discomforts that must have been part of the reason he adopted it.

Between 1820 and 1833 James Fenimore Cooper lived in Europe, much of the time in Paris. On his return to the United States he incorporated his observations of Europe in a series of *Gleanings in Europe*, two volumes of which, *Italy* and *Switzerland*, have recently been reissued, after being long out of print, by the State University of New York Press, Albany (Italy, 377pp; Switzerland, 361pp). Both volumes form part of the definitive edition of Cooper's works that has been appearing since the mid-1960s under the general editorship of James Franklin Beard, and are published with a full textual commentary and a historical preface by John Courton and Constance Ayers Denne, and for *Switzerland* by Robert E. Spiller and James F. Beard. Cooper's response to Italy is characteristic. He described it as "the only region of the earth that I truly love" and was censured as unpatriotic by contemporary American reviewers. He is a tolerant traveller criticizing the English for their "singularly unjust commentators on all foreign usages and foreign people".

Battles and between

By Geoffrey Carnall

A. D. HARVEY:
English Literature and the Great War with France
An Anthology and Commentary
162pp. Nold Jonson Books. £9.
0 907538 02 9

This is a spirited anthology, a succession of energetic narratives of battles and events between battles, together with some material drawn from the "home front" in the Napoleonic Wars. The texts will be unfamiliar to most readers, and they are well presented and introduced. The title is slightly misleading, for although most of the passages are of some literary merit, they nearly all belong to the genre of personal reminiscence, and there is hardly a glimpse of the wider literary landscape. Still, as A. D. Harvey remarks, the wars of 1792-1815 had little direct impact on professional writers, both because all but the poorer classes were exempted from active military service, and because there was nothing like the degree of economic mobilization that occurred in the world wars of the present century. The war could be kept at a distance. A non-participating audience could view the conflict "through an insulating barrier of romanticizing and gothic fantasy".

Mr Harvey cites John Foster's astonishment at the indifference displayed by his contemporaries towards wartime events (an indifference extremely unfavourable to the pretensions of epic poets like Joseph Cottle), and might of Foster's abiding preoccupation with "that protective obtuseness which we acquire in defence of our own ease." Jane Austen

was probably more representative than most people of her time might have dared to admit: "How horrible it is," she remarked after the Battle of Albuera in 1811, "to have so many people killed - and what a blessing that one cares for none of them!"

This volume certainly pierces the insulating barrier of romantic poetry and official art. Charles James Napier's account of his part in the Battle of Corunna, and Cavalier Mercer's narrative of Waterloo display the confusion and the carnage with a Tolstoyan fidelity. Napier's short-sightedness heightens one's sense of the impossibility of getting any perception of a battle as a whole, but the accession of moments of intense danger and distress none the less suggests movements and manoeuvres in confusing interaction. What is most impressive is the sense of Napier's coming to terms with an almost unbearable memories, "as when he had to abandon one of his own wounded men. 'I felt it horrible to leave him', he says in words that form a curious parallel to Jane Austen's, "but selfishness and pain got the better." Mercer, with normal eyesight, was little the better for it, though he had a sharper view of the mangled men and horses (some with entrails hanging out). These two narratives were not published till long after they were written. Napier's in 1857 and Mercer's in 1870, when a naturalism of this kind was well established. They form an odd contrast with the stilted extracts from stones by William Hamilton Maxwell, published in the 1830s, included in this anthology to illustrate the genesis of the war novel.

One of the few extracts to come from a work published shortly after the wars (in 1818) is an anonymous narrative by a Scottish soldier who served in the campaign that ended at

Corunna. It is a fine evocation of bleak physical hardship, of a mind pushed to the limit of endurance, a story that could have figured in *Lyrical Ballads*.

Harvey is anxious to suggest parallels between the Napoleonic Wars and the world wars of the present century, using titles like "Lest We Forget", "Into Battle", "Colditz 1808-style", and "Total War". The contrasts are often more striking than the similarities, particularly where the scale of warfare is concerned, though George Jackson's eye-witness description of the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 makes clear that this is an authentic forerunner of the air bombardment of civilians. Jackson's horror, says Harvey, "was shared by the rest of the civilized world". This is not altogether true: Coleridge's defence of the affair in *The Friend* is very civilized indeed, although his characteristic obliquity perhaps hints at an unacknowledged uneasiness. At the time, Southey condemned the bombing as "an everlasting and ineffaceable infamy", but later, during the war with America, thought that Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and other east-coast cities should be given the Copenhagen treatment: a nice example of the brutalization of the civilian mind in time of war.

The civilian mind, indeed, is not adequately represented in these pages. Sir Philip Francis appears sourly appraising his contemporaries in a way that shows his obnoxiousness to the wars, Samuel Bamford evades the pressing. Wordsworth and Southey celebrate Waterloo on the top of Skiddaw. But some material might well have been found to illustrate the hopes and anxieties generated by the conflict, constantly threatening to erode the insulating barriers and the protective obtuseness. In this respect the anthology is a little disappointing.

Home comforts

By Anne Duchêne

CATHERINE COOKSON:
The Mary Ann Omnibus
798pp. Newdon Ltd. £6.95.
0 354 04604 7

"Everything in this story is fictitious, except that which you yourself know to be true". Catherine Cookson wrote in 1954, at the outset of her career, as prefix to *A Grand Man*, which was the first of the eight "Mary Ann" novels now reprinted in one volume. The italics are not hers, but it seems worth stressing the brave device she nailed to her mast so early, and under which she still triumphantly sails.

These days there are never fewer than fifty Cookson titles in print in English at any time; they are translated into fifteen languages; and new books are still steadily produced, for which hectorated loyal readers wrestle discreetly in high-minded public libraries where fiction cannot be reserved – or "only serious fiction", as one of our librarians explained when we queried the presence of *Scoop* and *Black Mischief* on the Reserve shelf. (You can, just now, buy the latest Cookson paperback in Woolworth's; and many care to test the axiom that no Cooksons are found on second-hand shelves, unless with in about fifteen minutes of arriving there.)

Catherine Cookson, certainly, is not "serious" fiction; not because she is associated with naughty words like "best-seller" and "profit", but because, quite simply, she is not a good enough writer. It is, on the other hand, inaccurate to call her, as those who do not know her often tend to do, a "romantic novelist". "Romantic novelists" deal in matters which their readers know not to be true. Miss Cookson scorns such delusiveness. She writes stories in which her readers can gratefully recognise experiences and emotions of their own – heightened to be sure, by greater comedy or greater violence than their own lives normally vouchsafe, but based on all their own affections, furies, aspirations and reactions.

The antithesis of "romantic" is presumably "domestic", here. Miss Cookson, like Burns, assumes that "to make a happy fireside clime" is "the true pathos and sublime" of most human life, and that achieving it is very often very rough going. She has a number of abrasive tendencies which keep her well outside the "romantic" pale: as much concern, for instance, with the pain encountered after marriage as with the innocent turbulence before; a liking for children, whose unreasonable demands seldom disturb romantic fiction; an acknowledgement of old people, and a willingness even to depict them, if need be, as ungenerously nasty, mean-minded and malign (like Mary Ann's maternal grandmother).

Again, when Mary Ann's husband, in the last story here, nearly succumbs to a blonde and long-legged siren, the temptress is called Diana Blenkinsop. Plainly Miss Cookson knew this was a risible name for a *femme fatale*; presumably she chose it partly to keep a trite situation within some reach of comedy, as she always likes to do, and also to sustain her readers' experience that people called Blenkinsop can be just as dangerous as any others.

Close scrutiny of this kind induces, indeed, grave doubts about Mary Ann's husband. His name is Corry Boyle – short for Cornelius – and he has hidden depths, of course, but the name still suggests some reserve on the author's part. Marriage in the last of the *garnage* he owns is, like other marriages, certainly domestic rather than romantic in character, and at the very end Mary Ann is achieving a degree of independence by willing regular places for the local paper, based on the *Welshman's* of the family dog.

Mary Ann's own name was Shakespearean, which makes her much harder to pin down than a Boyle or a Blenkinsop, but her father is only tenuously Irish – a founding, given

the name of the workhouse porter – and all the books are set, like most of Miss Cookson's, in Tyneside. Much is always made of Miss Cookson as a regional author, but the Tyneside veneer here is in fact thin: there are two paragraphs describing sunset on the shipyard, and for the rest of the time people say "Eeh!" and "By!" as interjections, and Mary Ann has to be taught not to say "me" and "me ma"; children are invariably "brayed" when given a good hiding, but only bus-drivers say, "divin't hang about"; and Corry in his brief unrepentant phrase says "A'm gonna laro it proper". It is a relief when, like Mary Ann, he adopts what the author calls "Northern English", which reads like Standard Received but has to be imagined with attractive local colouration.

Elocution figures prominently throughout the books. Once Mary Ann begins to go to "posh" convent schools, with "the better-class children of Newcastle and Durham and thereabouts", they "talk ever so nice", and when she was with them she talked ever so nice too, though not quite like the other girls' parents, whose voices were "high up in the head, sort of swanky". Only Mary Ann's magnificent "da", the "Grand Man" of the opening title, manages more mysteriously in "posh" encounters: "He never talked like this to her ma, nor had she heard him talk like this to anybody else. Not that he was putting on, but he was talking nice and... passing himself." The dots are the author's, and – like dashes – often beset her; this same paragraph concludes: "It was a revelation to her, a joyful revelation. Oh, she was so proud... her da could pass himself."

It will have become apparent by now that most of the book is recounted through Mary Ann's own streaked thought. This has the double advantage of making a strong demotic appeal to readers, and of muffling the author's own rather majestic indifference to punctuation and language: such phrases as "it was her he was yelling at" are natural in Mary Ann, but confusions of "sensitivity" with "sensitivity", "repulsed" with "repelled" often make a cracked sound when the narration shifts focus to describe some particularly strong emotion in another character. (The printing – from America, and photostated here – is execrable, so one cannot always blame the author for the many collisions of pronouns, and even the frequent transposing of lines.)

The Mary Ann saga of eight books, written over thirteen years, lends itself readily to unkind summary. The first came nearest to fairy tale; Miss Cookson wrote a good many other books over the same period, and learned to lengthen her stride. In this book, Mary Ann is a child in a Jarroo slum, and her "da" is often drunk (or, as Mary Ann invariably, and rather irritatingly, calls it, "sleek"), because he loathes the shipyard and longs to work on the land. Mary Ann's life is very full, and very full of emotions. Apart from alcohol and slum rivals to fight, she also has to monitor her parents' relationship and intervene whenever it goes awry. (She likes to see them "kind" together, and "larking" on the kitchen sofa, and eavesdrops steadily to ensure this end; it is to be noted that though she always hears them if they quarrel, she never reports them making love.) She also has long confidential chats at the local Catholic church with dear old Father Owen, and more passionate and unstable ones with the life-size figures of the Holy Family ("It was a funny thing about them, she thought. Sometimes they were all over you and other times they didn't let on you were there").

Finally, Mary Ann does a Shirley Temple on the local John Barrymore figure, Mr. Lord, a shipowner, who is extremely rich, lonely, grumpy, embittered and so on. Touched to the core by this child who "could lie with the innocence of an angel or the purpose of a priest" (also, as his aged retainer puts it, "with the temper of a banshee and the cunning ways of the wee folk"), Mr. Lord gives her "da", a job on the farm, and a cottage with it.

None of the other books ends with quite such traditional radiance. Indeed, Miss Cookson herself seems to be wildly to effecting reconciliations between the estranged parents of her school-friends, and so on. She is first sent to a "posh" convent school in the South by Mr. Lord, anxious to expose her to more polite influences than Jarroo's, but runs away after rumours that a young woman is making a set at her "da", and a letter from her mother which ends with what Mary Ann at once recognizes as a dried tear-drop. Weeping takes place on a Victorian scale throughout the books; not only weep in anguish, but the large female cast is allowed to weep when happy as well as sad. Language is equally prodigal, though Mr. Lord "always had to sit down when he laughed, for the unusual emotion seemed to shake his entire frame", and other people double up and have to grope for chairs too – a rarer sight, really, when you come to think of it, than tears; but Miss Cookson likes to communicate all emotions generously.

Troublesome scruples

By Patricia Craig

MARGARET FORSTER:

Marital Rites
183pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
0 436 16112 5

After the thriller, the tranquilizer. Margaret Forster's last novel, *The Bride of Lowther Fell*, was a credible exercise in the neo-Gothic mode, agreeably convoluted and suitably temperate at the moment of climax. *Marital Rites* returns us squarely to London N6, where a lady named Anna Osgood has made a terrible discovery. She has found out that her husband Robert is capable of infidelity. He has told her so himself, in a letter which filled poor Anna with alarm and dismay. What letter had not been posted! Soon Anna, in her best green dress, is driving towards Wandsworth and Robert's office, pausing only to wave cheerfully to her neighbour Lucy, who is heading for Sainsbury's.

A plan has come into Anna's head. She will waylay her husband's secretary, Betty, and persuade her to tell Robert that a mishap occurred to yesterday's mail. It never got posted. If this is the case, the Osgood alliance can return to its pristine felicity, and no harm done. (Anna is not thinking clearly.) This marriage, which approaches perfection in everyone's eyes, is surely worth a little dissembling on the part of Anna.

Ah, but it was the worry of deceit that led Robert to put his marriage in jeopardy in the first place. Or was his action prompted by some deep need to test the strength of the marital tie? It is difficult to tell. Margaret Forster makes no attempt to devise consistent psychological motivations for her characters. Robert and Anna, indeed, are considered only in the light of what they do to or for one another.

"She admired him only for what he was: a happily married man. If he was no longer a happily married man then his identity was gone and her admiration with it."

This is Betty's view of her employer. Betty is a Scottish orphan, plain, sturdy and sentimental. Her heart is in thrall to the idea of Robert and Anna as a happy couple. In the moment of shock when she learns of Robert's possible infidelity (Anna is not explicit) she agrees to do as Anna asks. Then she changes her mind and tells Robert what she has done. At this point in the novel, Robert knows that Anna knows, but Anna doesn't know that Robert knows she knows. The plot is now beginning to resemble a quasi-mathematical problem. If A is better than B and C, and C is cleverer than A and B, who is the most deserving of all?

All such summaries are, indeed, unfair. What Catherine Cookson's books transmit is the impression of an essential honesty and generosity of feeling, which leaves her splendidly outside the safe little pale of her "romantic contemporaries". However much she sometimes fudges her prose, or for practical purposes pulls her punches, or scatters homely comfort about like vision seems clear, and by no means always comfortable, but always generous. She has what Dr Johnson called a sound bottom of sense. "If Mary Ann lives to be eighty and she marries into the top drawer, she will remain a child of the Tyne... a man or woman are their first ten years", the "da" says at one solemn moment (and Mary Ann in the end, of course, chooses Corry, from the slums). More potent even than this ugliness is the warmth of family affection and loyalty she postulates.

She has also been more enterprising in her themes than the Mary Ann corner-stone suggests, and in 1968, for instance, produced a book about a half-caste girl – stunningly

beautiful, to compensate for her other difficulties, but these are not entirely evaded: "Life must be paid for", her black father says, and she might pay "perhaps with babies who would be black outside as well as in." "In this story I make no effort to solve a problem", the author's foreword said. "The solution, if there is one, for the living conflicts, the half-castes, would seem to lie in the far, far future." Not a "fearless confronting" of the problem, then; but a generous thesis in this context and at that time.

Hence, then, the fifty books in print, and the fifteen languages into which they are translated. It was probably John Julius Norwich, in a radio conversation with other travellers, who once said it was often overlooked that 86 per cent of the world's people were kind and well-intentioned. Even if one divides them by half – and there seems no need to debate the matter of why one assumes Miss Cookson's readers are female – it still makes something too large to be a sub-culture; and something of which she has most honourably tapped the mainsprings.

This is by far the longest of his published correspondences, extending over nearly forty years and comprising more than four hundred letters, many of them long "lettres-bavardages" in which views and opinions are exchanged with a freedom and lack of inhibition uncharacteristic of the normally restrained Larbaud. Marcel Ray was the son of a local headmaster in Vichy who was introduced to the Larbaud household at the age of sixteen as a holiday-companion for the young heir to the Saint-Yorre mineral-water fortune, who was three years his junior. The differences in their upbringing led to a certain friction at first but they shared a common passion for literature and there soon developed a friendship which, although they never departed from the more formal "vous" in addressing each other, became a close and intimate one. Their correspondence will be read not just because it charts the relationship of two highly articulate and cultivated individuals but because it evokes the atmosphere of a whole epoch in French literary history. It was an epoch in which, for example, the name of Baudelaire rose from comparative neglect to the pantheon of French poetry – in 1934 Ray wrote to Larbaud recalling that forty years earlier "il ne fut guère d'usage de citer Baudelaire" – and in which a vast influx of foreign literature took place, with Larbaud as one of its prime movers.

The opening letters are marked by a note of reserve, caused by the difference in their ages and by Ray adopting a somewhat protective attitude towards his younger correspondent. Any barriers that still existed between them, however, were broken down in 1901 by a trip together to Germany, where Ray was about to spend a year. Even before that was ended Larbaud confided to Ray ("C'est Walt Whitman qui a mes amours") and wanting to introduce "un grand courant d'esprit étranger" into France. He pictured himself lavishing French literature at the head of a troop of English and American writers, soon to be followed by Australians and Canadians, among whom he had heard of some powerful dramatists. Moreover his interests were not confined to the English-speaking world. As early as 1902 he speaks of adding Portuguese to his range of languages because "j'entends dire partout que le Brésil a une littérature admirable". His lists of purchases for his library at La Thébaïde seem endless. Although Léon-Paul Fargue's eventual count of 50,000 volumes was a gross over-estimate, complete editions of Thoreau, Hawthorne, Carlyle, Byron, Chateaubriand (38 vols.), Musset and Lamartine (68 vols.) "c'est toute une bibliothèque", all figure within the first few years of this correspondence.

Ray for his part was a German specialist. After coming second in the *agrégation d'allemand* in 1904, he occupied a succession of teaching and research posts, including that of *suppléant* at the University of Mont-

VALÉRY LARBAUD/MARCEL RAY:
Correspondance 1899-1937
Tome I, 1899-1909, 368pp.
Tome II, 1910-1920, 337pp.
Tome III, 1921-1937, 393pp.
Edited by Françoise Liouze
Paris: Gallimard.

Valéry Larbaud deserves to be better known in this country than he is – and not to be continually confused with his more illustrious contemporary Paul Valéry. Many of his works are set in England, including his delightful account of a walking-tour in Warwickshire in the summer of 1909, *Le Coeur de l'Angleterre*. He was for a number of years the leading "angliste", as he used to call himself, for both *La Phalange* and *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. He played a major part in translating and introducing into France, among others, the works of Walter Savage Landor, Coventry Patmore, Samuel Butler and James Joyce.

This is by far the longest of his published correspondences, extending over nearly forty years and comprising more than four hundred letters, many of them long "lettres-bavardages" in which views and opinions are exchanged with a freedom and lack of inhibition uncharacteristic of the normally restrained Larbaud. Marcel Ray was the son of a local headmaster in Vichy who was introduced to the Larbaud household at the age of sixteen as a holiday-companion for the young heir to the Saint-Yorre mineral-water fortune, who was three years his junior. The differences in their upbringing led to a certain friction at first but they shared a common passion for literature and there soon developed a friendship which, although they never departed from the more formal "vous" in addressing each other, became a close and intimate one. Their correspondence will be read not just because it charts the relationship of two highly articulate and cultivated individuals but because it evokes the atmosphere of a whole epoch in French literary history. It was an epoch in which, for example, the name of Baudelaire rose from comparative neglect to the pantheon of French poetry – in 1934 Ray wrote to Larbaud recalling that forty years earlier "il ne fut guère d'usage de citer Baudelaire" – and in which a vast influx of foreign literature took place, with Larbaud as one of its prime movers.

The opening letters are marked by a note of reserve, caused by the difference in their ages and by Ray adopting a somewhat protective attitude towards his younger correspondent. Any barriers that still existed between them, however, were broken down in 1901 by a trip together to Germany, where Ray was about to spend a year. Even before that was ended Larbaud confided to Ray ("C'est Walt Whitman qui a mes amours") and wanting to introduce "un grand courant d'esprit étranger" into France. He pictured himself lavishing French literature at the head of a troop of English and American writers, soon to be followed by Australians and Canadians, among whom he had heard of some powerful dramatists. Moreover his interests were not confined to the English-speaking world. As early as 1902 he speaks of adding Portuguese to his range of languages because "j'entends dire partout que le Brésil a une littérature admirable". His lists of purchases for his library at La Thébaïde seem endless. Although Léon-Paul Fargue's eventual count of 50,000 volumes was a gross over-estimate, complete editions of Thoreau, Hawthorne, Carlyle, Byron, Chateaubriand (38 vols.), Musset and Lamartine (68 vols.) "c'est toute une bibliothèque", all figure within the first few years of this correspondence.

Ray for his part was a German specialist. After coming second in the *agrégation d'allemand* in 1904, he occupied a succession of teaching and research posts, including that of *suppléant* at the University of Mont-

Cases of cosmopolitanism

By Peter Fawcett

pellier. He began a thesis on the German poetic revolution of the 1880s but, having waited in vain for a permanent university appointment, in 1912 embarked instead on a career in journalism. This led him eventually to the political editorship of *Le Petit Journal* – nicknamed variously in this correspondence *Le Petit Journal*, *Pauvre Jérôme* and *Le Petit Juteux* – and to a series of governmental posts at home and abroad. He was De Gaulle's Inspector General of Cultural Affairs after the Liberation. His true profession, however, he told Larbaud in a letter in July 1913, was neither that of a journalist nor a pedagogue but "homme de lettres paresseux".

Both men had a number of material difficulties to contend with. In Ray's case these were almost purely financial, but in Larbaud's they were complicated by the interference of his reluctant mother. Although Charles-Louis Philippe once said of Larbaud that it was a pleasure to meet someone beside whom Gide was made to look poor, he was never able to enjoy his inheritance to the full because his mother distrusted her son's spending habits and his literary associations. Twice he tried to wrest the capital from her grasp but had to be content with a judicial order, allowing him a regular, sizeable income. As a result he became an habitué of the pawnshops of Europe, where he deposited jewels from time to time. Ray, by virtue of his position, was frequently pressed into service as a go-between in this family warfare and received the confidences of both sides.

The correspondence remains fairly sparse until 1907, which was the year in which Larbaud finally completed the *licence d'anglais* he had started six years earlier. By this time he had acquired a measure of self-confidence and was capable of returning advice to his older colleague as well as receiving it. When Ray frustrated in his efforts to join the academic hierarchy, thought of applying for a scholarship to go round the world, Larbaud informed him: "En voyageant continuellement, vous n'aurez le temps de rien faire, vous perdrez l'habitude de travailler régulièrement", and went on to cite his own case: "J'ai eu de la peine à m'y remettre, vous pouvez vous en douter et je m'y tiendrais". His own cosmopolitan way of life he educated in his mother, whose presence made Vichy ("cet enfer de fange froide et d'eau pourrissante") uninhabitable to him.

Ray's role in the conception and elaboration of Larbaud's most famous creation, the American millionaire Barnabooth, "citoyen de Wagons-Lits", is apparent from these letters. He it was who encouraged Larbaud to submit the original volume of *Poèmes par un riche amateur* (1908) to the printer and did not desert until the definitive edition of Barnabooth's *Oeuvres complètes* was published in 1913. He was constantly afraid that what he called Larbaud's "modestie littéraire" would lead him to underestimate the originality of his character, whom he frugally in a Don Quixote, and "le héros éponyme du dernier siècle de notre culture, le Julien l'Apostrophe du capitalisme mourant". Ray hoped that Larbaud would go on to create other Barnabooths and was clearly disappointed when his talents directed themselves instead to the charming portraits from childhood known as *Enfances*, one of which developed into the short novel *Femmina Marquez*.

If Larbaud had followed his own inclinations after completing his *licence*, his attention would have been turned more in the direction of French and Mediterranean culture. He told Ray in a letter in August 1906, at first the two natives of Bourbons, with their widely differing social backgrounds, did not fit in, but the following July Larbaud wrote to Ray to say that he had revised his opinion of Philippe and now found him superior to them

savoir est très peu répandu, où la vie intellectuelle est nulle, où tout est en retard", its only advantage being that "les Anglais sont les premiers au monde pour l'élégance masculine". He settled instead on Walter Savage Landor in order to please his mother, who wanted him to obtain a doctorate as quickly as possible in the hope that it would improve his marital prospects. There followed a period of prolonged visits to England and Italy, where Landor had lived in exile, though it was not until 1912 that Larbaud was able to spend more than two months abroad at any one time without returning home to see his mother. To Ray, who envied his "libre existence", he explained that Paris and Bourbons had become for him the home of all his bad

When Philippe died in December 1909, Larbaud, who had never been a member of the Groupe de Carné, found himself taking on responsibility for the "family", as he called them, of Philippe's friends, Marguerite Andoux, the former seamstress, had her manuscript of *Marie-Claire* nursed carefully through to publication and Fargue was taken firmly in hand, his *Pauvre Jérôme* rescued from oblivion, and constant pressure applied until his volume of *Poèmes* was ready for publication by the NRF in 1912. Ray wrote from Montpellier: "Je trouve admirable votre tentative de sauver Fargue, alors que tout le monde l'abandonnait. [...] Et le service que vous rendez à Fargue, vous le rendez à toute la famille".

In 1922 Larbaud met the faithful companion of his later years, Maria Angela Nebbini. Soon thereafter he began to suffer a Rousseauist persecution mania, which lay at the root of his rupture with Fargue and the increasing isolation in which he lived, for few less than his friend to find him, even after his mother's death in 1930, meeting his beloved in the public-room of a hotel for an hour before returning home to the family villa to sleep alone.

Five years later he himself was struck down by the cerebral haemorrhage which left him half-paralysed and almost speechless for the remaining twenty-two years of his life. His last trip abroad before this calamity was to visit his old friend Marcel Ray, then French ambassador to Albania, and around this journey their relationship enjoyed a brief Indian summer. In February 1935, he told Ray how he refused to join the horde of writers publishing their novel or their book of essays (or both) every year and preferred instead to work chiefly for himself composing bit by bit, "avec les mieux vus de mes pages écrites pour mon amusement", the collected editions of his articles and short stories. And when Ray spoke to him of the growing habit of classifying authors according to the place given in their works to major contemporary problems, his thoughts turned immediately to Buber "qu'il a bien écrit l'homme des 'problèmes de son temps', et qu'il n'a rien ou presque rien écrit de valable sur ces problèmes, ou en fait de solutions à ces problèmes. [...] Mais à propos de ces problèmes, et à propos de ses théories du genre de 'La Femme Auteure de l'Odyssée', il a écrit mille et mille choses géniales et dont on peut dire qu'il est un grand maître".

It is doubtful if Larbaud read widely today even in France. His style of literature is no longer fashionable. It is the style of a man who believed that to be "heureux et tranquille au sein des bibliothèques" was "encore le meilleur usage qu'on puisse faire de la vie". His was a quiet and distinctive voice amidst the cacophony of the first quarter of the century and a number of his works deserve the epithet of "petite merveille" rightly applied by Ray in this correspondence to his imaginary excursion to his native Bourbons. *Allen*. It is to be hoped in this centenary year of his birth, as he writes himself of one of Butler's works, that it is impossible that his own will not have at least fifty readers in each generation. In the meantime this correspondence, whose publication would no doubt have horrified Larbaud, is a fitting testimony to his honesty and integrity.

As a critic, Larbaud saw it as his function to "défendre et soutenir les maîtres et pousser avec force les jeunes, tout en luttant contre l'ambition", de "certains d'entre eux", as the circle of Philippe's friends came to be known. He introduced Larbaud to Philippe in November 1906. At first the two natives of Bourbons, with their widely differing social backgrounds, did not fit in, but the following July Larbaud wrote to Ray to say that he had revised his opinion of Philippe and now found him superior to them



Valéry Larbaud in 1934.

and was himself encouraged a few months later to come and "prendre devant le public la place que vous avez depuis longtemps dans notre famille" by becoming the book-reviewer of *La Phalange*. During this same period Larbaud earned the respect and affection of Gide and his colleagues at the NRF, to whom he became known as "le petit père Larbaud".

Despite his selfless championship of the works of others, Larbaud could not bear to see his own work similarly publicized. He once told Ray that he did not wish to owe success either to his connections or to his money. His sole ambition was to "exprimer artistiquement mes sensations et ma façon de voir la vie" in 1911, apropos of Jules Romains' *Les Hommes nouveaux*, he wrote: "Pour ma part, je n'ai jamais jugé dignes d'être publiées les choses que j'avais battues sur un plan très d'avance. Ce sont celles que j'ai découvertes à mesure que je les écrivais que je crois dignes d'être lues par d'autres que moi." Literature for him was an exploration, not a development. As a result many of his works were held back from publication, including *Le Coeur de l'Angleterre*, which was deemed by Ray to lack the "musique intérieure" characteristic of his best work.

As a critic, Larbaud saw it as his function to "défendre et soutenir les maîtres et pousser avec force les jeunes, tout en luttant contre l'ambition", de "certains d'entre eux", as the circle of Philippe's friends came to be known. He introduced Larbaud to Philippe in November 1906. At first the two natives of Bourbons, with their widely differing social backgrounds, did not fit in, but the following July Larbaud wrote to Ray to say that he had revised his opinion of Philippe and now found him superior to them

The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw SHAW'S MUSIC

The complete Musical Criticism in three volumes edited by DAN H. LAURENCE

'Had he never written another word these would surely have made Shaw's name. For sheer brilliance there is nothing like it in the English language - or any other, for that matter.'

NOBERT HARTFORD, *Punch*

'In these three enthralling volumes every word of Shaw's musical criticism has been gathered... What a testament Shaw's Music comprises, what a canvas it lays out, what a wealth of unstated, gloriously plain-spoken, endlessly pertinent comment on the art and the performance of music it offers!'

MAX LOPPERT, *Fin Times*

0 870 802 17 8, 0 870 802 49 4, 0 870 802 49 6 £15 each

Arabs and Africans

Co-operation for Development
ANTHONY SYLVESTER

This book traces the contribution which the oil-rich Arab countries have been making to economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa, with particular reference to the work of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, an inter-Arab agency especially set up to assist this region. The author discusses the economic and social problems of the region, whose forty countries include some of the world's poorest, and records the ideas and opinions of those directly involved in Arab-African co-operation.

0 870 30382 8 £7-50

Supermarine Aircraft since 1914

C. F. ANDREWS & E. B. MORGAN

Foreword by Sir Peter Massfield

This book traces the entire development of the Supermarine company, one of the great names in British aviation. It is illustrated with some 800 photographs and with nearly 80 general arrangement drawings which include some hitherto unpublished projects.

(Putnam) 0 870 10018 2 £15-00

Fiction

The Hunger
Whitley Strieber

0 870 30388 9 £8-50

BODLEY HEAD

commentary

Out of the shadows

By Tanya Harrod

Meninsky
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford.

David Bomberg, Mark Gertler and Bernard Meninsky came from similar Jewish east European backgrounds and were at the Slade in and around 1912. They were all successful before and during the First World War, creating ambitious and admired art. Bomberg was the most experimental and acclaimed, making entirely original works in a style which might best be described as geometrical constructivism. Gertler and Meninsky were primarily figurative artists drawing inspiration from the neo-primitive areas of Post-Impressionism. Bomberg exhibited regularly, working towards a fluid abstract style based on landscape studies. He was entirely overlooked in the 1930s and 40s and was only reinstated as a major British artist after his death in 1957. Gertler, always the most self-doubting of men, was haunted by the assurance of his youthful work and committed suicide in 1938. Meninsky felt desperate uncertainty about the coherence of his own art, and took his life in 1950.

Why did things go wrong for so many artists in Britain after the First World War? In crude terms, during the post-war years the buying public liked bad art. "Flowers and still lifes with jolly little ornaments" as Wyndham Lewis put it, while those who supported the avant-garde preferred French paintings. In this context the cultural hegemony of Bloomsbury has perhaps been exaggerated, but Clive Bell actively dismissed home grown art (whilst making a curious and partisan exception of Duncan Grant). In 1920 Bell wrote of Bomberg, Lamb, Lewis, the Nash brothers, the Spencer brothers and William Roberts: "Were they really born to be painters? I

wonder. But of this I am sure: their friends merely make them look silly by comparing them with contemporary French masters." With hindsight we can see that the best British artists working between the wars - particularly those so offensively attacked by Bell - were all in different ways aware of French art but none the less un-French. Yet the School of Paris could cast a long shadow over the unconditioned artist. Gertler wrote in 1929 of Matisse and Picasso: "Ah! those aristocrats! moving so high above me - what a rough, clumsy peasant they make me feel."

Meninsky's retrospective at Oxford's Museum of Modern Art reveals a similarly troubled spirit. His heroes were Cézanne, Derain and Picasso. Curiously their influence was chiefly confined to his painting; Meninsky painted in a much more modern way than he drew. His drawings were fluent, beautiful and entirely traditional, concerned with outline rather than structure and for that reason irrelevant to his desire to paint like Cézanne. The best are the 1918 sketches of his wife and baby son. Perhaps it is understandable, therefore, that his most resolved paintings tended to be familial portraits.

The "Portrait of a Boy" of 1917 (not in the show, but illustrated in the excellent catalogue) is a wonderful picture. The pose and hieratic effect surely derive from Bronzino, but he achieves volume (as did Stanley Spencer and Henry Lamb at that date) through the articulation of flat areas of light and shade. "Portrait of David" (1923) is equally evident. It is close to the "Boy in the Red Waistcoat" in mood, in the employment of a draped background and, up to a point, in the way that it is painted. Perhaps the best of this group is "David with a Cap" (1925), where again he seems closer to the Mannerists than to the modernists. His son's elongated form is thrust right up against the picture plane, the perspective is distorted, the finish is



"Portrait of David" (1923), from the exhibition reviewed here.

smooth: the whole effect is one of elegance.

It seems likely that Meninsky did not feel portraiture to be central to his art. He revealed his modernist ambitions in still life, landscape and the nude. In his weaker works the influences are all too easily dissected: what may be called French marks, based on the brushwork of Cézanne, inform the landscape and still lifes. A series of paintings of his women show that Meninsky had looked hard at Picasso's neo-classical works.

has remained in overdrive. Some people think that his attitude and serious art are mutually exclusive, but they're usually very boring people."

Punk is now behind Clarke, but Ritz has taken over and the critical and cultural climax of his life so far came in 1980 when "Time Lag Zero" was unveiled by the photographer Patrick Lichfield at Langan's Brasserie in London's West End, at a reception to mark Olympus (Optical UK Ltd)'s fifth year in England, the whole event being scrupulously recorded by Granada's cameras.

What more condensed summary of contemporary values can you get than that? (Meanwhile, on *Kaleidoscope*, he had threatened a critic with a "fat lip".)

Lifestyle apart, Martin Harrison's argument is that Clarke has been ignored by the "art set-up" because his work is in the Constructivist tradition. This would suggest that Ben Nicholson and Victor Pasmore (both unmentioned) have been unable to make a living, but Harrison's description of Clarke's sources explodes any serious claim that might be made for an intellectual perception on the artist's part of the significance of the Constructivist movement. The Swiss cross which dominates Clarke's work from 1978 onwards may be described as "an archetypal symbol of structural solidity", but its source is the grid reference point of the plumbline and pencil life drawing practice of the 1950s, the distinctive feature of William Coldstream's post-war work (unmentioned).

As a monograph, Harrison's work is inadequate. The quotations already made should give an idea of

its naively adulatory style. There is no bibliography, list of exhibitions, chronology, index or proper account of Clarke's architectural stained glass. Nor is there any mention of money. The book is lavishly illustrated, but many of the photographs are used to imply an association between Clarke's work and genuine Constructivist pieces, and make no true critical connection. The plates themselves are confusingly labelled in a mixture of roman and arabic numerals which seems to have left the designer with some embarrassing cross references to fill in at page proof stage.

None of the foregoing means that Clarke will not continue to enjoy a successful career as an executor of quasi-architectural commissions for large organizations who want something contemporary, but decorative rather than demanding. His latest panels and stained-glass for Olympus's offices in Hamburg look most attractive, and the architectonic is plainly his strong point. Harrison's words detract from the serene calm of the works. But one of Clarke's latest screen prints sums up his limitations. Entitled "The Cultures" it is a "tribute" to C. P. Snow and his lecture depicting the division between art and science. Accordingly, there is a graph paper overlay on the design, but the subject is simply a collage of reproductions - Mondrian, Moholy Nagy, Mies van der Rohe, photographs of Einstein, Snow and others. A Swiss cross has been drawn over da Vinci's analysis of the proportions of man. It is as culturally and critically in the mainstream as any second year art student's pin board.

Fortcoming exhibitions include *Le-ger* at the Riverside Studios from August 1.

TLS Children's books

The exaltation of childhood

By Claude Rawson

FRED INGLIS:

The Promise of Happiness
Value and Meaning in Children's Fiction

333pp. Cambridge University Press.
£17.50.
0 521 23142 6

"Over the last three hundred years... the child, having survived fifty per cent infant mortality, the factory, the workhouse, the coalmine, Mrs Trimmer and Victorian piety and the Sunday school and the blackboard, compulsory education and cod liver oil for all, has emerged triumphant as the liberated figure of today before whose sensitivities and vulnerabilities we all quail." These words from an unpublished lecture by Penelope Lively remind us that it is only recently that the child has acquired recognition as a being worthy of full human respect - or perhaps even a little more. He (or as Fred Inglis, bent on rectifying another of society's injustices, might prefer to put it, she) has had to survive oppression, indifference and idealization before emerging into this state. And in this regard his history resembles that of other disadvantaged groups, including women and the "subject races". Less than three centuries ago, Swift spoke of the native Irish as "altogether as inconsiderable as the Women and Children". Various ironies lurked in the comment, but the inconsiderability of women and children was simply assumed.

There is a long history of cruelty to children, and a sentimental historiography of progressive emergence from this. One historian cited by Inglis has proposed a slow transition from an "Infanticidal Mode" (Antiquity to fourth century AD) to better things; we have apparently now reached the "Helping Mode". More sophisticated historians draw a less simple picture, and some of the recorded horrors from the past occurred in periods when life was harsher and more violent all round. But of the fact of widespread cruelty to children, apparently accepted as normal behaviour through the ages, there seems to be no doubt. The other consistent evidence we have is of the child's "insignificance". One aspect of this is the "extraordinary silence about children" in the demographic records of "the pre-industrial world". And there are relatively few works of literature before the poems of Blake and Wordsworth and the novels of the Victorian age in which children, or the childhood state, are

given serious and extended treatment.

Even there the treatment is frequently at a level of high idealization, or else involves a sentimentally intensified compassion designed to draw attention to suffering and injustice rather than to portray the fully realized human creature. The child-victim of industrial exploitation is often presented in Victorian fiction with the same heartrending simplification as the Negro slave in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and for the same reasons. The result is a saintly stereotype better adapted to the urgent objectives of reformist persuasion than to the total "truth" which Flaubert demanded for the novel; and it is in some ways a humanely vulgarized extension of the exaltations of the child and of childhood by the great Romantic poets.

Reaction to both oppression and "inconsiderability", as in the case of conquered peoples or of women, often begins by taking the form of an idealization of some kind. The noble savage, the mistress as perfection of womanhood, and the angelically pure and submissive wife, are the best-known examples of a typical process. With children, even this idealizing stage came rather late. It is not simply synonymous with the child's emergence into fully human status, though (as with "savages" and women) it was one of the early signs and perhaps a conditioning feature.

Part of the "inconsiderability" of children probably had to do with the combination of a high birth rate and a high mortality rate, in periods before contraception and medicine were sufficiently developed to control both. Children came so frequently that they were in one sense no big deal, and parents had also to steel themselves into some degree of callousness because so many died at birth or in childhood. A protective unreadiness to think of the very young as fully-fledged persons would be understandable.

It is at all events a fact that children often did not seem to count very much more than savages, or slaves, or other groups overtly defined as inferior or subhuman. Cruelty was part of this second-class status. But the relationship of such a status to "cruelty" is not a simple one in the case of children. Ruining against it would be such factors as the parental bond, or the peculiar advantage which children had over other second-class humans that they could achieve the more respected status merely by growing up. Swift's satirical *Modest Proposal* would



"We missed the train. Two hours to wait! On Lime Street Station, Liverpool." - one of Posy Simmonds's illustrations to Kit Wright's *Hot Dog and Other Poems*, reviewed on page 843.

deny them the opportunity of doing this, though since they were the children of Irish savages and thus doubly subhuman there would be no great poignancy built into the situation. What a modern reader might not realize is that *A Modest Proposal* is not especially or primarily against cruelty to children or the poor or the Irish, for most of whom the author felt distaste, and that it exhibits no tenderness towards them. The onslaught is against economic mismanagement and political ineptitude among victim and oppressor alike, and the focus is less on the suffering of the victims than on the culpable absurdity of all those responsible for an absurd predicament. If we contrast *A Modest Proposal* with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, another work about the buying and selling of human bodies, we realize how far Swift is from seeking to generate the same kind of compassion over maltreatment, injustice, the break-up of family ties and affections. He didn't set much store by the latter, and his pamphlet shows the victims as rather bad at genuine family feeling anyway. Certainly no child is treated with the pathos, and with the centrality of attention, which we should take for granted in many nineteenth-century novels.

There is in all this a political dimension, both by analogy and

more directly (as in protests against child-labour in novels). The Wordsworthian exaltation of the childhood state coincides with the new attention accorded by literature and the new importance given by political thought to "children, outcasts, idiots, foreigners" at the time of the French Revolution. It is not simply that children were becoming a political category, but that concepts of liberty, tolerance, humanity, which received political expression at nine level tended to spread by analogy or extension to other modes of life. There was too a new focus on the idea of growing up. Where it had once been a matter of evolution from a more or less subhuman to a human status, the new idealized sense of the value of the childhood state entailed the feeling that it was this which vitinized and purified the later maturity, rather than being outgrown in favour of it. Ideally one should not "grow out of" childhood, but allow childhood to "grow into" our older selves. "The child is father of the man": Blake and Wordsworth captured a new and confident sense that the men and women who had grown up from the children they had all once been were limitlessly capable of embodying an entirely new social order.

With a few appropriate adaptations, such words could be used of

Montaigne on the subject of American Indians. And just as the "noble savage" of the primitivists had his ignoble counterpart in the British savages of apologists for empire or of Habbes's account of natural man, so the idealized child of Romantic tradition acquired his Hobbesian counterpart in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. What is interesting is how long it has taken for this aspect of the child to become embodied in an extended literary text, though "facts" about the natural cruelty of children had long been available for anyone to see in some nursery rhymes, and in children's slang and rituals. That this came so late is perhaps itself a measure of how long it has taken for the child to emerge fully from his state of "inconsiderability".

The natural momentum of current bids, or perhaps all bids, for the "human rights" of those who are or are felt to be underprivileged, is to pass from a phase of over-correction and inflated protestation to claims of "equality" of some sort. The claims include some solemn educational doctrines to the effect that children should be spoken to and treated as grown-ups, which taken to an extreme might seem to deny any logical place for children's books at all; or the old-fashioned pseudo-equilibriumism of that ghastly category, "children of all ages", which leads to a wide choice of nightmares, from anthologies of nonsense verse to the novels of Tolkien. More interestingly, Penelope Lively, who has recently been writing adult fiction but first established herself as a children's author, has insisted that she doesn't especially think of herself in any self-conscious way as writing "children's books", and has been inclined to play down the distinction, though she knows that to deny it altogether would be merely patronizing in another way. Her children's books are remarkable for their easy ability to portray and respect children as active and thinking beings, without pretending that they aren't children.

One of the best examples I know of the natural fusion of the two modes of fiction is *Going Back*, normally classed among her children's books. Its narrator is a grown woman who revisits her childhood home for the last time after her father's death. In remembering her early life, she recaptures her childhood state of mind and renders the child's idiom and feeling very vividly but without over-forgetting or disguising the fact that the narrative is a grown-up's sympathetic reconstruction of a child's

'England invented the children's book as we know it...'

Maurice Sendak

From the unique Osborne Collection in the Toronto Public Library, thirty-five

Early English Children's Books

chosen to represent the development of the art of children's book illustration in England. Reproduced in facsimile editions, books by Bewick, Caldecott, Crane, Cruikshank, Doyle, Greenaway, Lear and Upton are included in this box of treasures, each in a protective slip-case.

Complete boxed set with Descriptive Companion Volume £275 until 30 April 1982, then £325 370 30371 7 August

BODLEY HEAD



state of mind. Its enforced involvement between the child and adult perspectives has a freshness lacking in such naive ambitions and sophisticated achievements as *Wind in the Willows* or *The Go-Between*. (Ingis's account of this book seems to me out of focus, the product of a reductive determination to discuss the author as a "historical" novelist.)

The interpretation of the two worlds is even more inevitable than the penetration of "imperialist" values in the literature of racial emancipation. If black skins were white skins even in their most assertive declarations of negritude, the child's book is normally written by the grown-up, who has been a child. Not surprisingly, children's books and adult ones are in an infinite variety of ways, parodies of one another. Ballantine's *Coral Island* leads to *Lord of the Flies*, which is a reversal of the earlier book's pieties about the upstanding virtue of good English boys as compared with savages who commit "unspeakable crimes". It also leads to *Heart of Darkness*, which in only reverses any notion of a black monopoly of such riot, but in the later stages of the search for Kurtz acquires an element of the boy's adventure story, a lush suspenseful trucking through the jungle, conscious of its literary origins: "I kept to the track... I was circumventing Kurtz as though it had been a boyish game".

Lord of the Flies has all the surface of a boys' adventure book, and its protagonists are all boys. So Ingis can say the book "now stands well across the margins of children's and adults' novels". I don't know how widely or spontaneously it is read by children. It has frequently been set as a GCE text, but that is not the same thing and may even mean the opposite. Many of its ironies are for adults who may remember reading books like *Coral Island* in their youth and are likely to enjoy being disabused, and not for children who may recognize the behaviour as distinct from the ironies, but can get the former neat from straightforward unironic works. I assume it means little to them that the white boys are shown to be as savage as the tribal native used to be thought.

In an autobiographical chapter, Ingis speaks of the neo-chivalric heroes of the comic strips and other popular media, the footballers and cowboys and fighter pilots, as figures in whom there is "no strain or gap" between how they act and how they should act. They embody an effortless and unquestioning obedience to an ideal of honour which may in real life entail a "breaking strain for many people". "It is part of the

timeless quality in a child's view of the world that he or she learns and reverences values quite innocent of any relative qualifications". Thus his own early reading of *Bulldog Drummond* and other "intermittently awful books" of that kind was unaffected by elements which are "undoubtedly there: their relentless snobbery, their incipient Fascism, their arrogance and brutality". What he experienced within that framework was not any release of "adolescent anti-Semitism" but "pure admiration for the reckless, athletic courage of the hero, the simplicity and vividness of his moral and pugnacious reflexes... his sense of fairness".

Ingis's reading of superior specimens like Kipling and Buchan is an enhanced version of this, and the process is illuminated by a passage from Lawrence on his early love of Nonconformist hymns. It shows the ability of a relatively crude medium to enrich the imagination, to fill it with wonder and delight, in a curiously selective process that remains unaffected by banality or vulgar didacticism or sentimentality or ugliness. The essential point is that the child's mind is not easily precluded by the "liberal parent's" muscle-bound self-consciousness, rightly concerned in its way about, for example, the brutalizing implications of heroic codes. A principal assumption behind most of Ingis's arguments is that neither children nor other readers really "identify" themselves with the "vicarious experience" of their fictional entertainments, but that these feed into and out of the continuous totality of daily existence. On this topic, Ingis achieves an almost Johnsonian return to first principles.

The main discussion of "heroic" models of behaviour, from Homer to Kipling and beyond is in Chapter Six. Ingis begins unhappily with the charge of "Fascism". It's a foolish and imprecise term outside its precise political sense, and in various ways the wrong net to grasp. But if one is to grasp it, it is a pity to do so by way of a borrowed notion of Fascism has to do with "restoration of the body" and the assertion of "the individual against the machine". Both German and Italian Fascism stressed collective tribal might and imperial destiny more than any "individual" self-realization. Far from scorning the "machine", they glorified mechanized warfare as a beautiful "metallization of the human body" (Marinetti's words in praise of Mussolini's Abyssinian exploits). "Man's dominion over 'machinery'" meant not a return to organic unmechanized vigour, but the mastery of machinery to extend man's speed

and force and power to destroy. "The fiery orchids of machine guns", the high tanks and spectacular bombs never which the back of Fascism waxed lyrical, "were their charm precisely to a transfiguration of the body in the machine, the organic turned mechanical. When Auden compared epic and schoolboy heroisms (to which he was not merely hostile) with aspects of modern Fascism, it was certainly not for any individualist or antimechanical ideal. But in Auden's day, Fascism was Fascism and Auden knew, as Ingis apparently doesn't, what the word meant.

But even without these awkward facts, the history of Fascism in our time has so discredited itself that the word cannot be used without associations which both distract and detract from what Ingis is trying to say. He senses this occasionally, but it does not prevent him from flailing about in search of ways for the word to "be used, just momentarily, in a quite nonhostile sense". Why bother?

Nevertheless, he captures extremely well the increasingly difficult fortunes of the heroic in this century. That picture of manliness suffered terribly, particularly on the Stmme, not because men were unable to embody it in those dreadful circumstances, but because they did so pointlessly. The courage was available in awful plenty, but it was betrayed by the institutions which demanded it as a duty.

He goes on to give one of the best formulations I have seen of the conditions under which the ideal could still be activated, mostly in an ironic perspective:

Consequently, that manliness has played an increasingly ambiguous part in growing up in Britain and the USA since 1917. Appeals to its most noble version - courage in battle - made sense after Dunkirk and Pearl Harbor, but always in such a distinctly ironic and equivocal way that no boy could connect such action with life in a world not officially at war. The American experience in Vietnam served... to clinch the lessons begun in the poems of Wilfred Owen.

This book does not confine itself to the fiction of masculine heroism, though I think it is in this area that its excellences come out to their best advantage. He writes rather less well on the feminine counterparts, the ideal stereotypes of girlhood or womanhood, though he has many good things to say about individual novels written for or about girls. Throughout his discussions of the varied genres of children's fiction (historical romance, stories of magic, experiments with time, as well as tales in the more customary settings of childhood) he exhibits the same respect for children, the same breadth of sympathy, the same ability to move with discrimination and

without misplaced censoriousness between the subliterary achievements of popular culture and the great masterpieces.

The book contains a few prosy complacencies, most of them revolving around the figure of "the greatest teacher of English the English universities have ever known", under whom Ingis studied and who, like Jehovah, is much revered but seldom named. Ingis begins his book with words which commentators will recognize as a resounding replay of His Master's Voice: "The great children's novelists are...". Six names follow, as against the original grown-up version's four, but then, as one of Ingis's chapters announces, his is "The Lesser Great Tradition" and allowance should be made for the desire to make up in numbers what was felt to be a little short on weight. He shares some of the Master's urgency of concern about popular culture, and something of his gift for acute and memorable exposure of its falsities. His complaint about how the words "style" and "life" have been debased in the can-phrase "lifestyle", and his distinction between "values" and "class values", are eloquent pieces of social thinking. But Ingis is conspicuously less censorious about many aspects of our culture than his teacher would have been. This is not because he is more uncritical, I think, but because his mind is independent. This is a strong, awkward and generous book.

Forbidden friends

By Ann Thwaite

GINA WILSON:
A Friendship of Equals
Faber, £4.50.
0 571 11632 9

BETSY BYARS:
The Cybil War
Bodley Head, £3.50.
0 370 30426 8

TIM KENNEMORE:
The Middle of the Sandwich
Faber, £4.25.
0 571 116787

These three new novels - two English and one American - make for interesting comparisons. All three books are about the problems of friendship, the relationships between children at that age when friends (the sociologists' "peer group") are more important than anything else. The two English stories both have a good deal to do with class, one overtly and one, more effectively, not. The American story is a sort of cadet edition of the eternal triangle.

Gina Wilson's first novel, *Coral Ravening*, which was widely praised, was on the same theme. That was a story in the first person, as by an adult looking back to her childhood "all those years ago". The new book, with its rather dreary title *A Friendship of Equals*, seems similarly old-fashioned and might have worked better if it had been similarly distanced. As it is, it seems to be a contemporary story - Louisa moves from a Middle School to a Comprehensive - but the talk, the language, the whole ethos of the book, none of them ring true. The character of the forbidden friend this time the rich "cripple" Stella Bonaccini - is a shadowy companion with *Coral Ravening*, and the menacing figure of Agnes Love, the counterpart of Mrs Briggs, is melodramatic and unconvincing.

The other two books, Betsy Byars's *The Cybil War* and Tim Kennemore's *The Middle of the Sandwich*, are both set firmly in the real world of today. Indeed some of the contemporary references may become incomprehensible in a few years' time (images already passing of Donny Osmond, Kermit, *Star Wars*, punk, even a "mini-Watergate"). In *The Cybil War* two fifth-grade friends, Tony Angotti and Simon Kenmore, set themselves as rivals for the approval of Cybil, Ackerman. Their friendship had been sealed in second grade when the entire class was asked to write essays on their fathers' and neither of them had fathers to write about. Three years

later the friendship has become a habit and Simon has to concentrate hard on the good things about Tony Angotti. Life is more complicated: "Fathers desert you, friends lie about you, teachers humiliate you - and those are supposed to be the good guys."

Betsy Byars has always had a marvellously sure mixture of humour and deep feeling. *The Cybil War* is a slicker, easier, lighter book than, for instance, *The Midnight Fox* or *The Cartoonist*, but the feeling is still there. The opening scene, with Miss McFawn trying to cast a "nutrition play", is pure comedy. ("Simon can be Mr Indigestion." "Tony I specially want you to be the bill pickle.") But the war over Cybil Ackerman has pain and tension as well as laughs. The love quiz, the pet show, the saddest scene, all contribute to a story that moves quickly to the final scene where Simon admits to Cybil that he doesn't know how to pump up bike tyres with the air hose at the gas station. "Abruptly he abandoned his pose as the triumphant general. After all, the war was over. This was the real world and he better learn how it worked. He knelt beside her and watched."

The *Middle of the Sandwich*, at least for many English readers, will be an even more satisfying school story than *The Cybil War*. It is a richer, deeper slice of life. For her final term as a junior, Helen has come to live with her aunt, who teaches in a village school. Her mother is having an operation and convalescing. Helen is familiar with the village but only as a visitor, a holidaymaker. Now she has to try to

Tellyspeak

JAN STRACHAN:
Moss Beech
Oxford, £5.25.
0 19 271451 1

This book does some of the right things, some of them in the wrong way. "Right", that is, by the liberal middle-class standards which still firmly govern the empire of children's literature. Young Peter escapes from a council flat, where telly, pop music and incessant rows between serounging father and bingo-addicted mother make silence unknown, and takes shelter with an old man in a Peonine cottage; here he discovers the pleasures of hearing flat, where telly, learns the pattern of the seasons and sleeps with a farmer's daughter. This run of good fortune is broken when the tentacles of the Welfare State reach the cottage; but, despite the old man's resulting suicide, there is a hopeful ending.

Peter tells us his own story without

belong. It is not easy - first of all to adjust to her casual, relaxed attitude (and the discovery that she prefers her to her own mother) and then to fit in to the established group at school. The good jacket picture for the book by Margery Gill shows the child as an outsider, alone in the playground. (That fine artist has also done the jacket for *A Friendship of Equals*, but it looks a little too much like a cheerful advertisement for the Year of the Disabled.)

The striking thing about Ms Kennemore's first novel is her assured handling of an adult in the context of a children's story, a rarer feat than one would suppose. She not only depicts Jess, the aunt, with vivid exactitude (I would only demur at the suggestion that she reads the *Telegraph* rather than the *Guardian*), but shows, with no sentimentality whatsoever, how possible it is for children and adults to be friends.

The peculiar nastiness one child can show to another culminates in a splendid scene where Helen pours paint all over the particularly loathsome Joanne Barclay. Jess's reaction is: "Well, you awful child, next time you do something like this, let me know first. Then we can all come and watch." This was not pre-Borstal talk; Helen blinked in confusion. Under the circumstances, Mrs Barclay has decided not to press charges, which means you're not actually to be flogged, just given a telling off." Helen finds a lot of Jess's behaviour unpredictable. There is indeed nothing predictable about the book at all. It is fresh and individual and very well written.

authorial intervention, recording his journey from folly to wisdom. The trouble is that the language has not made the same journey. Tellyspeak relentlessly applied becomes the language of the author, and by its nature it cannot record individual experience.

One small symptom: "who's" for "whose" cannot be Peter's fault; once it might be the printers, but three times it must be the author's. Similarly, the author is responsible for dead metaphors and oversimplifications; it is no excuse that Peter has heard such things on television. The distinction between author and narrator, and between Peter as he was and Peter as he has become, ought to be crucial. Yet Jan Strachan seems unaware of them; he could do with a crash course in *Great Expectations* and the art of first-person narrative. Fiction is made of words. *Moss Beech* is readable and its plot quite ingenious, but its language comes from - and feeds - the very culture which it seeks to oppose and expose.

Dominic Hibberd

Dido lives

By Brian Baumfield

JOAN AIKEN:
The Stolen Lake
Cape, £5.50.
0 324 01924 4

Devotees of Joan Aiken will be delighted to learn that *The Stolen Lake* recounts the further adventures of the remarkable Dido Twite who first made her appearance in *Black Hairs in Battersea*. Newcomers can however read this story independently.

The tale abounds with incredible happenings as Dido finds herself accompanying the upright Captain Hughes on his ship; mink for England by way of the east coast of Roman America. (Regular readers will be aware that the Hanoverian succession to the English throne never occurred and good King James III is monarch.) The Captain receives an urgent message bidding him visit upon the Queen of New Cumbria, an ally who has appealed for help from England because someone has stolen her lake - frozen into ice blocks.

Dido, a pert cockney sparrow, who is by turn cheeky, comic, shrewish, but above all resourceful, returns ashore with her protector, Mr Holystone, the captain's steward. But hardly have two chapters passed before she has been abducted by Mesdames Morgan and Vainsour, seamstresses extraordinary. The strange country where they have embarked has more than its fair share of villains, not least the Queen herself. Queen Geneva is a fat repellent lady of very dubious vintage, equipped with two-way mirrored glasses (Guinevere would surely turn in her grave by this parody). She only rouses herself from a state of torpor by the mention of her long lost husband, none other than King Arthur of legendary fame, who is due to make a return appearance after 1,300 years, and for whom the Queen waits.

The machinations by which the stolen lake is returned, a lost princess rescued, with the help of Dr Johnson's dictionary, a rightful king restored, and various villains dispatched to suitably horrific ends, make for exciting reading. Dido, a born survivor, enhances her reputation still further, and assuredly we have not heard the last of one of

Pupil power

JAN MARK:
Hairs in the Palm of the Hand
Kestrel, £4.25.
0 7226 57283

Children will certainly recognize the reference in the title to the old schoolboy joke about detecting the first signs of madness (the second sign, of course, being to look for them). On this tongue-in-cheek note, Jan Mark presents us with two splendid short stories, both with school settings, and demonstrates once again her skill as a storyteller.

It is not easy to capture aspects of a world with which children are so familiar but Jan Mark has a wonderful eye for just the right detail and a real feeling for character and narrative which she uses very effectively here in two horribly realistic and hilariously funny pictures of school life. She manages to view the world of the school with a sympathetic understanding for both teachers and pupils, whilst using all her wit and ingenuity to show the real essence of life at school: the boredom, the humour, the constant struggle for power within and between both staff and pupils and particularly, the thin line between organization and chaos. It is chaos that reigns in these two stories.

The first story, "Time and the Hour" is set in a boys' school where one small boy has been keeping a private tally of exactly how much time is gained and wasted by the form each school day. The class

"leader" discovers the system and persuades the whole class to bet on the following week's loss or gain. This opens the way for absolute chaos in class 1x as various members of the form ingeniously attempt to gain or lose time. The details of this amusing idea are cleverly reported down to the last second and the schoolmaster's timely intervention at the end is handled in a masterly fashion.

"Chutzpah" is set in a large comprehensive school on the first day of term. Ellen, a lively, precocious girl, dressed in bomber jacket, jeans and West Ham ted-shirt, against school regulations, spends the day apparently looking for her new form. In fact, she uses her considerable talents to cause as much disruption and dissent as possible, in the interests of democracy and women's rights. How easily she manages to survive a day without ever entering a classroom, makes amusing reading.

These are two memorable short stories, very much in the vein of *Thunder and Lightning*. The stories are longer than those in Jan Mark's earlier collection *Nothing to be Afraid of* and this seems to allow her a greater freedom to develop her skills, while remaining within the confines of the short story. Certainly, the stories compare very favourably with the best of *Nothing to be Afraid of*. Children of ten and over (and many adults) will find much in *Hairs in the Palm of the Hand* to identify with and laugh at.

Judith Eldon

Inventing for fun

By Nicholas Tucker

ROALD DAHL:
George's Marvellous Medicine
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
Cape, £3.95.
0 224 01901 5

CAROLYN SLOAN:
Further Inventions of Mr Coggs
Illustrated by Glynis Anbrus
Methuen, £4.95.
0 333 31125 6

For some time now Roald Dahl has been the most popular living novelist that we have for children, despite, or sometimes possibly because of, lapses in taste that have not always found equal favour among adult readers. His latest offering, *George's Marvellous Medicine*, is a good example of the young often at the cost of offending many of the older sort. It is about a small boy who declares war against his disgraced grandmother, described variously as "skinny old hag", or a "grizzly old grump", with "a small, pickered up mouth like a dog's bottom".

Such a picture may well reflect quite graphically small children's occasional resentment of the elderly, plain and frequently querulous. Yet since the days of Dickens and W. S. Gilbert, and their pitiless humour at the expense of old age, it has been customary, especially in children's books, not to encourage such attitudes. Instead, there have been reams of admittedly often rather anodyne books about witches who are merely lonely or misunderstood rather than evil, and if grumpy old ladies still survive in other stories, they are usually portrayed with compassion rather than cruelty. Not Mr Dahl, however, not only does his young hero George think murderous thoughts about his grandmother right through to the end, he also actually administers some "medicine" to her made up from the bathroom (nail varnish), the kitchen (sauce polish) and the garden shed (antifreeze and engine oil).

At this point, what could seem like a blue-print for a new type of granny-busting turns into outright fantasy, with the old lady first floating like a balloon and then growing as high as a crane - an effect well caught by Quentin Blake's illustrations. In fact, I am sure that most children will read the whole of this otherwise lively and inventive story as something purely fantastic, and old ladies still sheltering

in household corners will probably be quite safe to say where they are, rather than double quick. And yet, as with the marvellous medicine itself, a slightly nasty taste does persist after consumption, despite much else in the tale that is both fast and funny.

Carolyn Sloan's *Further Inventions of Mr Coggs*, meanwhile, is as opposite a story as one could imagine: witty, detached, whimsical and finally, alas, over-ingenious to the point of dullness. It concerns an inventor whose best friend is a computer, and as such is an electronic updating of Norman Hunter's stories about dear old Professor Braustawm, and his more mechanical aids. By contrast, there is plenty here about "memory banks", "special tapes" and so on, while some of the dialogue is oddly effective. "Why don't you do something to cheer me up?" Mr Coggs punches out at one moment, to receive the computer reply, "I am not programmed to be sympathetic." The trouble, though, is that the author tries to be funny all the time, so that no first story line ever emerges to help readers along when the humour sometimes flags. But when Carolyn Sloan learns to balance her stories more successfully, she should be a writer worth watching out for.

Jafta's Family Series

"When I'm happy, said Jafta, I purr like a lioncub..."

Stories by Hugh Lewin
Pictures by Lisa Kopper

Four picture books that are relevant to any child, anywhere. In simple expressive language an African boy talks about himself, his mother, his father and a wedding in his family. This is the kind of depicting image children need of cultures other than their own. These are the kind of children's books of which there can never be enough - comprehensible yet enriching, widening horizons, enlightening and delighting.

Gillian Klein T.E.S.

Jafta - My Mother
Jafta - My Father
Jafta - The Wedding
Each 24pp 187 x 225mm
£2.50 net

SUMMER FUN FROM KESTREL!

James Marshall
GEORGE AND MARTHA ONE FINE DAY
The youngest children will enjoy sharing an absurdly funny fine day with James Marshall's two hippos, George and Martha. £3.95

Jan Ormerod
SUNSHINE
A delightful picture book which looks at the experience of starting the day through the eyes of one small girl who wakes up rather earlier than everyone else. 'Wordless, and well-named' T.E.S. £3.95

Rosemary Harris
THE ENCHANTED HORSE
Illustrated by Pauline Baynes
An award-winning author and artist have combined their talents to produce a richly-detailed picture story book in the Indian folk-tale tradition. £5.95

Margaret and Mary Baker
BLACK CATS AND THE SILVER CROWN
Illustrated with silhouettes drawings.
Witches' spells and mid-summer magic form the background to these two joyful and charming fairy tales. First published over 50 years ago, they are now re-issued in a handsome new volume, uniform with the highly-acclaimed *The Lost Mermaid* and *The Wishing-Nut Tree*. £3.95

Kit Wright
HOT DOG AND OTHER POEMS
Illustrated by Patsy Simmonds
Kit Wright mixes sparkling fun and humour with some serious moments to produce a wonderful collection of easily accessible poems for young readers. £3.75

Artists and writers

By Kicki Moxon Browne

Not so very long ago, the first completely wordless picture book (Irene Meyer's *Vicki*, 1968) was published, causing some debate as to whether it was really a book at all. Since then many have appeared, with books such as *The Shimmering* and *Sunshine* having no text, but are nevertheless eloquent - and would lose much of their impact if accompanied by a story.

The hero of *Trink* is a vast articulated lorry, bright red and decorated on both sides with the word "TRUCKING" in huge white letters. We follow the lorry, ironically loaded with trucks, on its journey through traffic jams, fog and rain, tunnels and spaghetti junctions, forever jostling with other vehicles, assaulted by blaring traffic signs, and belching out black smoke. There is some imaginative play with perspectives - we never see the lorry from the same angle, and sometimes we only see a little corner of it - which gives the pictures movement and immediacy. An urban nightmare maybe, but nevertheless a very enjoyable book, and a worthy sequel to *Freight Train* by the same artist.

Sunshine is very different. The setting is entirely domestic. The story, in the form of a strip cartoon, tells us about a little girl, who gets up early in the morning and wakes her father, who gives her breakfast and

then goes back to bed, deeply immersed in the morning paper. The little girl gets herself dressed, and then draws her parents' attention to the time. Chaos ensues, while the parents rush about getting dressed. Finally, everybody has left the house and peace is restored to be enjoyed by the solitary rag doll. The title, incidentally, refers to actual sunshine, which underlines the unfolding of the story, growing from a little patch until it finally explodes into a white light as the parents leap out of bed. It is a likeable story, full of warmly humorous sequences, such as the girl dressing herself - you can see from the way she is standing that all her clothes are twisted and probably half of them back to front, and that her shoes are on the wrong foot. To me the only false note among the otherwise well observed drawings is the girl picking up the alarm clock with a stereotyped expression of surprise - I wonder whether such a small child would really react so strongly to the time, particularly as the clock has notches rather than numbers on its face.

The picture books this season have their usual share of traditional tales with new illustrations. There are two new books from Tonie de Paola, *Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog* and *Fin McConl. Old Mother Hubbard* is set out as a stage play, watched by characters from nursery rhymes. The first picture shows the curtain, bearing the credits, the last Mother Hubbard and her dog taking a curtain call, one bedecked with flowers, the other clutching a bone

and seventeen with the next. Apart from this, it is a nice book, the stylized paintings aglow with subtle shades of colour, ranging from candy pastel to richly luminous, and the translation is sprinkled with pleasingly obscure turns of phrase. David Cox's illustrations of his story, *Miss Bunkle's Umbrella*, are unusually restrained; in fact they look quite severe at first sight in black and white with the occasional splash of yellow. But the story about an elderly school-teacher and her exotic adventure in Java is so satisfying, told with economy and elegance, and text and pictures complement each other perfectly. My children liked it very much.

Lachlan's Walk uses fear to underline a strongly moralizing point. A little boy decides to go off by himself to find the lunch. Having narrowly escaped being run over by a car, Lachlan loses his way and is trapped on a sheer cliff face, holding on to a tuft of grass. He is finally rescued by kind Mrs Markov and all ends happily back in the garden with the family, Lachlan presumably having learnt his lesson. My nerves felt quite raw as the story proceeded, particularly as, to facilitate reading, the text is arranged in short lines, taking on the visual rhythm of an ominous chant: "She opens the high wire gate / of the school yard and calls, / Oh no! He is running towards the cliff. / Lisa's little brother Lachlan is / running towards the cliff".

At the opposite end of the scale, *The Day Jimmy's Bon Ate the Washing*,

which describes an American school trip to a farm and which has no message at all, but is just a great hill-billy romp. Most children enjoy slip-stick comedy, and here is a veritable orgy of pigs getting into a luss and eating all the picnic lunches, children pelting each other with corn and eggs, and of course the bou constrictor eating all the laundry. I have no doubt that a great many children will love the book, but it left me with a rather uneasy feeling. It seemed to be deliberately ingratiating, like giving mountains of sweets to a child, and hoping for the best.

Animal stories are always well represented in children's picture books. *The Lonely Rhinoceros* is a nicely conceived if somewhat stodgy story of animals borrowing pieces of each other's skin. It is really the Rousseauesque/pastoral pictures with a multitude of detail that make the book stand up to constant re-reading. *Adelina Schline* introduces us to a family of snails living in a slummy-looking cabbage patch, all drink vegetation, brokes household objects and stagnate water with flies (the story is appropriately dedicated to Patricia Highsmith). Delightfully repulsive pictures abound, as the snails wobble about their business, leaving ample trails of slime behind them.

Finally, a new edition of the Edwardian ballad *The Highwayman* with illustrations by Charles Keating. It is a beautiful book, but it is undeniably blood-thirsty, with Keating in his most uncompromising mood. The elements of violence would probably make the book rather disturbing for most children under, say, nine or ten, but it might slot rather well into the awkward gap that still exists between children's and adult literature.

acquire a kitten and visit the countryside. Some of the background pictures are painted with a pleasing childlike fluency, and one suspects by a different hand from that which portrayed Topsy and Tim, stylized in the 1960s manner of an Eastern European comic, with triangular mouths and no old-fashioned assortment of clothes. Children, however, have not sufficient discrimination to realize how unattractive Topsy and Tim are, and will find more going on in these pictures than in any of the others.

It may seem then that the jumble sale is better value than the board book, in which the bulk and expense of the board leaves very little over for the book. There is room for improvement, with a clear need for more imaginative art-work, but it may already be too late. Rumour has it that a new generation of indestructible books made entirely of plastic is on its way across the Atlantic - books which may change the face of British bathtime.

PRINCE OF THE DOLOMITES
Tonie de Paola
An Italian legend of the sun and the moon lovingly retold by one of the foremost illustrators of children's books. £3.50

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT
Selina Hastings author
Juan Wijngaard artist
This classic 14th century tale is retold in modern language and illustrated with ten striking colour plates. £3.95

WHY THE ROPE WENT TIGHT
Bamber Gascoigne author
Christina Gascoigne artist
The Gascoignes have taken a brilliantly simple idea and created a unique, funny, full-colour picture book. £3.95

THE HARRY GARDEN
Sekiya Miyoshi
A beautiful account of the Garden of Eden story told in a clear, simple way. £3.95

THE SERPENT TOWER
Russell Hoban
An unusual and intriguing story, with full-colour pictures, which grips at several levels. For older readers. £4.50

Younger Fiction

MARDIE TO THE RESCUE
Astrid Lindgren
The second book about Mardie, the unruly, tender-hearted little girl. £4.95

THE STONEWALKERS
Vivien Alcock
An outstanding fantasy. A tale with a touch of the supernatural in which statues that come to life dominate two girls' lives. £4.95

A TIDE FLOWING
Joan Phipson
Mark's friendship with a handicapped girl leads to his greater maturity and understanding. £4.95

The morality of the menagerie

By Ann Martin

Few books achieve the classic standard of using the animals' own habits and behaviour to shape and develop the plot. But animals certainly continue to be favoured by publishers: in this selection of picture books nine out of thirteen feature animals, and undoubtedly a simple story often seems to be enhanced by their use as protagonists - perhaps, too, a moral tale is made more palatable by being enacted by woolly toys or cosy wild beasts, while illustrators have a lot more scope for their imagination than if they were confined to human shapes.

Mrs Pig's Bulk Buy is a charming example. Ten little pigs are somehow more engaging than ten little children to draw; the incongruity of their expressions point the humour in this fable of gluttony. They snout everything with tomato ketchup; so, for a whole day, Mrs Pig feeds them nothing else. The lesson is learnt, however, is restored. Not altogether an original idea, but well told and delightfully illustrated.

With built text and pictures *Turtle Spring* successfully lends a little about turtles and springtime. Ten little turtles picnic at the sight of a bump in the ground: the idea that it might be a

humb rather than a monster sounds a disturbingly modern note. However it is only ten more baby turtles who finally emerge. The story is full of amusing touches which help to overcome any trace of cynicism. The same is true for *George and Martha One Fine Day*. There is no good reason why two hippopotamuses behaving like a small boy and girl should be comic, but it is so: there is a Bnbar-like quality to the incongruity of these short tales of the tricks the two play on one another, with Martha always having the last word.

Where *Cuthbert and the Good Ship Thingamabob* is slight, an excuse for the exuberant pictures of Cuthbert the dog and his oddly-shaped friends as they go adventuring beneath the sea. There is a lot of detail and pretty colour in the illustrations for a child to enjoy. Another oddity with considerable appeal, definitely enhanced by drawings instead of children, is *Elsworth and the Cats from Mars*. Elsworth forays into space with the help of

visiting Martian cats. The witty illustrations and the comic-strip layout, combined with space travel, an idea which could fascinate most small children, could make this a favourite book.

The books described so far have quite a lot of text in them, which needs to be read for full enjoyment. In the next three the words are minimal, and not important. *Ready, Steady Go!* pictures a small bear's obstacle race. The simple, clear drawings are appealing and good for the very young. *Feeding Bubbles* is also a first stage book. Bright pictures and easy words describe how various animals suckle their young, ending with a human mother and child: useful for a nursery school, perhaps. The allegorical *Boy with the Umbrella*, spreading happiness with flowers along his path, has words only at beginning and end. Here are clear narrative pictures with scope for parent and child imaginings.

An Alphabet book with a difference which would appeal to the youngest but also be much enjoyed by older children is *On Market Street*. A little boy goes shopping: each letter is then represented by a figure composed entirely of the items bought, from apples and doughnuts, noodles and wigs, to mention but a few of this idiosyncratic and delightful list. This is a book which should give hours of pleasure. It

is worth trying, not just borrowing from the library.

Oliver Button is a Sissy is well told and amusingly drawn. Oliver does not like games, so his understanding mother pays for dancing lessons and he enters a local competition (which he does not win - a good touch). After this everyone thinks better of him. Apart from a personal antipathy to the word "sissy", this is a worthy little book, good for library shelves.

More difficult to assess is *Zooey and Hazel*. Perhaps it could best be described as to the style of *Catcher in the Rye*; a rambling story of two girls and

their imaginary adventures with a monster in the fields and woods near home. The monster is good, the writing a bit too self-conscious and overlong for the seven-year-olds at which it must be aimed.

Finally, brought all the way from Australia - and one does rather wonder why - *Hare and Badger go to Town* is concerned with pollution. Hiding from the crop-spraying aeroplane, they stream of journeying to a city where animals try to adapt to life underground. But information, not adaptation, is the answer. A fashionable message, ponderously told. Others do it better.

MARY RAYNER: *Mrs Pig's Bulk Buy*. Macmillan. £3.95. 0 333 30978 2

LILLIAN FLOWERS: *Turtle Spring*. World's Work. £2.95. 0 437 44691 4

JAMES MARSHALL: *George and Martha One Fine Day*. Kestrel. £3.95. 0 7226 5733

DAVID McPHAIL: *Where Can an Elephant Hide?* Andre Deutsch. £3.50. 0 233 97349 4

KIM CHISHOLM: *Cuthbert and the Good Ship Thingamabob*. Illustrated by Yasuko Kimura. Evans. £3.95. 0 237 45564 1

PATIENCE BREWSTER: *Elsworth and the Cats from Mars*. Hutchinson. £3.95. 0 09 144800 X

SHIGEMI WATANABE: *Ready, Steady, Go!* Illustrated by Yasuo Ohmoto. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30406 3

CHUYO NAKATANI: *Feeding Bubbles*. Bodley Head. £2.95. 0 370 30404 7

CARME SOLÉ VENTURELLI: *The Boy with the Umbrella*. Blackie. £3.95. 0 216 91066 2

ARNOLD LOBEL: *On Market Street*. Illustrated by Anita Lobel. Ernest Benn. £3.95. 0 510 0118 1

THOMAS DE PAOLA: *Oliver Button is a Sissy*. Methuen. £2.50. 0 416 89650 2

GILL BRIND and CHRIS AUSTIN: *Zooey and Hazel*. Illustrated by Gill Brind. Hamish Hamilton. £1.25. 0 241 10589 7

NAOMI LEWIS and TONY ROSS: *Hare and Badger go to Town*. Andersen Press. £2.95. 0 9154 7894 0

INVITATION TO A MOUSE AND OTHER POEMS

Eleanor Farjeon
Illustrated by Anthony Maitland

To mark the centenary of her birth, Pelham Books have published the most comprehensive edition of Eleanor Farjeon's work now available.

Invitation to a Mouse will delight and entertain children of all ages. Illustrated with line drawings £4.95

ROBOT REVOLT

Nicholas Fisk

Nicholas Fisk has won considerable acclaim for his fast-moving adventure stories. *Monster Maker* and *Escape from Spatterbang*. His latest novel is concerned with no less than the overthrow, by robots, of the whole human race. £4.50

RUN FOR HOME

Elizabeth Berridge

To avoid the career that his parents have mapped out for him, a young school-leaver runs away from home - and into an exciting adventure. Elizabeth Berridge's first book for older children is set in the Cambridgeshire countryside. £4.50

KING TULLE

Jrmeln Sandman Lillis

Translated by Joan Tate
The legendary tale of Tulle, who founded the mythical kingdom of Tuntula and built the great hall of Tulaborg. Illustrated throughout with striking line drawings by the author. £3.95

Pelham Books, 44 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DU

Totleigh Riddles

- 1 Insubstantial I can fill lives, Cathedrals, worlds. I can haunt islands, Raise passions Or calm the madness of kings. I've avoed fed the affectionate. I can't be touched or seen, But I can be noted.
- 2 We are a crystal zoo, Wilders of fortunes, The top of our professions. Like hard silver nails Hammered into the dark We make charts for mariners.
- 3 I reveal your secrets. I am your morning sootny, Though I give reassurance of presence. I can be magic, Or the judge in beauty contests: Count Dracula has no use for me. When you leave I am left to my own reflections.
- 4 My tensions and pressures Are peaceable if transitory. Iridescent, I can float And catch small rainbows. Beautiful luxuriate in me. I can inhabit ovens Or sparkle in bottles. I am filled with that Which surrounds me.
- 5 Containing nothing I can blind people for ever, Or just hold a finger. Without end or beginning I go on to appear in fields, Ensnare enemies, Or in another guise Carry in the air Messages from tower to tower.
- 6 Silent I invade cities, Blur edges, confuse travellers, My thumb smudging the light. I drift from rivers To jolter in early morning fields, Until Constable Sun Moves me on.

Answers: 1 Music; 2 Stars; 3 Mirror; 4 Bubbles; 5 Ring; 6 Mist.

John Cotton

THE BEST NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Picture Books

WAYFARRERS ALL
Kenneth Grahame author
Beverley Gooding artist
A beautifully illustrated story from *The Wind in the Willows* in which the Water Rat decides to set sail for foreign lands. £3.95

THE COMIC ADVENTURES OF OLD MOTHER HUBBARD AND HER DOG
Tonie de Paola
This well-loved nursery story is humorously illustrated with intricate detail by Tonie de Paola. £3.95

Older Fiction

THE STONEWALKERS
Vivien Alcock
An outstanding fantasy. A tale with a touch of the supernatural in which statues that come to life dominate two girls' lives. £4.95

A TIDE FLOWING
Joan Phipson
Mark's friendship with a handicapped girl leads to his greater maturity and understanding. £4.95

Younger Fiction

MARDIE TO THE RESCUE
Astrid Lindgren
The second book about Mardie, the unruly, tender-hearted little girl. £4.95

THE NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS BY MARY MATHEN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The stuff of fiction

By Cara Chanteau

GILLIAN CROSS:
A Whisper of Lace
Oxford University Press. £4.50.
0 19 271447 3

SUSAN PRICE:
Christopher Uptake
Faber. £4.75.
0 571 11680 4

It is difficult to write a good historical novel. To do so requires delicacy of touch if the reader is to avoid that tiresome feeling of being improved, or the equally unflattering suspicion that the author will trust him to understand only those points mentioned three times. This is a strongly borne out in these two children's historical novels.

The first of these, *A Whisper of Lace*, is not as the title might suggest romantic as well as historical, although it must be said that the heroine does have "over-heated brown eyes" and a "mobile mouth". In fact it is a charming tale of contraband, ruthless blackmail and escape. The young crippled Daniel and his tomboyish sister, Selma, had always played at being pirates. On the return of one of their elder brothers, the cool, mocking Francis, Selma who is bored and impatient with her life becomes involved in a glamorous real-life smuggling adventure. Only Daniel and his new friend, the sensible servant girl Betty, realize the genuine danger of the escapade, and to them falls the task of saving the day.

The plot is kept moving, but the characters seem to be chosen from a manual of stereotypes, and the inevitable pointers - "unfashionably flushed cheeks, the 'fastidiously' taken pinch of snuff - live only within the safe confines of the cliché.

It is with a book like Susan Price's *Christopher Uptake* that one appreciates just how successful the genre can be. Without the standard family conflicts, misdirected inheritances, or women tussling about in any significant way, the story-line is refreshingly original.

Christopher Uptake, the sixteenth-century protagonist, is a clever joiner's son who wins a scholarship to university, but finds that he is far more inspired by the idea of drama and play writing. When expelled for such activities, he escapes a living by his writing. Through his own goodness, he is unwillingly involved in a spy ring to expose subversive Catholics. Forced by the inhuman Bagthorpe, into spying on his own patron, Edmund Brentwood, Christopher gradually discovers that he has been ensnared in a terrifying world of intrigue and double loyalties.

Although the story is dramatic, the portrayal of the night Christopher is achieved with a degree of sensitivity and sophistication that makes for a realistic and readable novel. Elizabethan university town is curiously described without the customary reveling in the insubstantial arrangements of the time. Any necessary historical information is given unobtrusively. It should appeal to all teenagers who dislike being bled, but who enjoy an element of suspense and a character who is easy to identify with, at odds with the world.

As awareness grows

By Sarah Hayes

PETER DICKINSON:
The Seventh Raven
Gollancz. £4.95.
0 575 02960 9

Young people are traditionally held to spend much time and energy sitting up late at night setting the world to rights. In fact most teenagers are concerned exclusively with specifics - with friends, clothes, sports, music, or whatever is currently turning them on. Global awareness comes, if at all, with adulthood.

The *Seventh Raven* is narrated by a seventeen-year-old girl, a participant in a real-life drama which draws her aside from immediate preoccupations and briefly offers her a new and wider perspective - one in which right and wrong are not clearly defined, and the nature of art, commitment and loyalty are called into question. Peter Dickinson has always been fascinated by the intuitive power of myth, which can work in his view either for good or evil. His new novel contains his most unorthodox discussion of the subject to date.

It is necessary to start with the philosophical basis for this story, because that is the book's raison d'être. It is also necessary to get it out of the way quickly since, in the words of one of the characters, "good messages make bad music". The dialogue between art and commitment, between freedom and liberation, might have been earnest and tedious in the hands of a less able writer. Couched as it is in the language of an articulate teenager, the discussion is never boring, merely a little

contrived: messages make the music too good to be true.

Most people, however, don't bother to listen to the music, and most people will find *The Seventh Raven* a very good read. The wit, the pace, the sympathetic characters, and the mythic quality of the book are all here. The setting for the book is the annual children's opera mounted by a small semi-professional band of Kensington parents known as the Mafia. Doll Jacobs at seventeen, with eight years of playing owls, slaves, white-tails (Jonah), flames (Burning Fiery Furnace), and numerous wicked women behind her, is too old for the opera and manages to infiltrate the organizing Mafia. Her descriptions of Baal, tribesmen, warriors, hand-maidens and hulk that can be chopped up on stage, is horribly funny. And all too recognizable to anyone involved in drama and children is the account of the first rehearsal where the composer makes his work come alive for the children only to be sabotaged by the scripping of Elijah's ravens - the youngest, and loudest, offstage performer.

The pleasure of joint effort, of seeing the work develop, the security of being amongst "our sort" - that is the social/aesthetic elite of Kensington squares, Westminster and St Pauls - these are the qualities that fuel Dickinson's enthusiasm for the opera and his plot is cunningly set about with surprises and shifts of mood. It has to be said, though, that this is a lesser piece, a work that feels more thought-out than it should. A book that, in the last analysis, lacks that quality of absolute strangeness and wonder that pervades the very best of Peter Dickinson's work.

Peter Dickinson has a splendid creation in his narrator. He has totally absorbed her attitudes to other people, her views and especially her language - that schoolgirl (all beasies and actualities), part mature and reflective. His setting, too, and minor characters are bursting with life and humour, and his plot is cunningly set about with surprises and shifts of mood. It has to be said, though, that this is a lesser piece, a work that feels more thought-out than it should. A book that, in the last analysis, lacks that quality of absolute strangeness and wonder that pervades the very best of Peter Dickinson's work.

At first it is a game: Montau (read Chilean) terrorists burst into the church after some gunfire outside and

imprison the cast in full costume. They are looking for Elijah's seventh raven, nephew of the future president of Matien, but Juan is already disguised as a handmaiden. As the children are organized and secrets are kept, the terrorists begin to chat and time passes. Then Juan is discovered by the militia, the girl terrorist and the atmosphere changes: the children are frightened, the adults unsure of the situation and the terrorist jumps. The edginess continues as the terrorists mount a show trial, choosing as their representative criminal the most vulnerable person in the church: Doll's cellist mother, Council for defence, in the person of the costume-designer, an old-guard socialist no longer so sure of the party card she has carried over the years, asks awkward questions. The trial is brought to a sudden end with a sentence of death and a shot. Immediately police rush in, and a relative normality is restored. Doll has been changed however - by the events themselves, by what has been said on both sides, or possibly by no more than the passage of time. Now she is free to go on.

Peter Dickinson has a splendid creation in his narrator. He has totally absorbed her attitudes to other people, her views and especially her language - that schoolgirl (all beasies and actualities), part mature and reflective. His setting, too, and minor characters are bursting with life and humour, and his plot is cunningly set about with surprises and shifts of mood. It has to be said, though, that this is a lesser piece, a work that feels more thought-out than it should. A book that, in the last analysis, lacks that quality of absolute strangeness and wonder that pervades the very best of Peter Dickinson's work.

Paperbacks in brief

One Dragon's Dream by Peter Pavay (Picture Puffin. £1.00 14 050 359 5) A rhyming, counting dream of a dragon's encounters with two turkeys, three tigers etc. in a mysterious cluttered setting. Ten turtles low him home to bed. Ages 5 to 7.

A Peaceable Kingdom by Alice and Martin Provensen (Picture Puffin. £1.25. 0 14 050370 6) 1978. A nineteenth-century alphabet verse originally written for Shaker children which mixes mythical and common animals, mottoes and metres. The illustrations echo the feeling of the original manuscript. Ages 5 to 7.

The Twelve Dancing Princesses by Errol Le Cain. (Picture Puffin. 91p 0 14 050322 6) 1979. Elaborate formal pictures complement the re-telling of the Grimms' tale of the soldier who discovers how the king's wonderfully beautiful daughters wear out their shoes each night and thus wins the hand of the eldest princess. Ages 5 to 7.

Noggin and the Island (100 661 707 7) and *Noggin and the Flowers* (100 661 708 5) by Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin (Picture Lions. 85p each.) 1969 and 1971. Two stories in the saga of

King Noggin the Nog in the Lands of the North. Noggin, Nooka and Knut battle against Noghda the Badland win. Ages 5 to 7.

Odette: A Springtime in Paris by Kaye Fender and Philippe Dunas. (Eel Puffin. £1.95. 0 194008 3) 1978. Watercolour sketches of Paris illustrate this gentle tale of a baby bird and the old man who looks after her one summer in Paris. Ages 5 to 7.

The Good Tiger by Elizabeth Brown. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. (Magnet. 95p. 0 16 21230 1) 1965. The adventures of the good tiger who is very well behaved and only eats cake when he goes to tea with Bob and Sarah. His efforts to behave like everyone else are misinterpreted by the grown-ups and lead to a chase in the forest. Ages 5 to 7.

Pigwig by John Dyke (Magnet. 95p. 0 416 20980 7) 1978. The course of Pigwig's wooing of the disdainful Matilda in a series of outlandish haunts. This last millinery creation helps capture a burglar and win Matilda's love. Ages 5 to 7.

Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales edited by Naomi Lewis. Illustrated by Philip

Knock and Wink by Gwen Gwent (Armada Lions. 95p. 0 00 67162 4) A continuation of the adventures of the heroine of *Private, Keep Out!* The breathless first-person account of a year spent in a nursing home in 1949. Ages 7 to 11.

Cunningham's Little Red Record Book by Bronnie Cunningham (Puffin. 95p. 0 14 031334 1) Original. A junior book of records collecting improbable anecdotes and facts under such headings as "snails", "ghosts", "stunts" and "the world's worst spelling mistake". Ages 7 to 11.

Playing it cool

By Alan Jenkins

KIT WRIGHT:
Hat Dog and Other Poems
Illustrated by Popsy Simmonds.
Kestrel. £3.75.
0 7226 57226

Kit Wright must be sick of jokes about his tallness and his new book of verse for children is full of a playful - but sharp and witty - grasp of what drives people up the wall and how merciless children's observation of adult silliness can be. The tone and the eye of these poems may be innocent, but not as innocent as all that. There is room for the absurd, the grotesque and the egomaniac.

The subjects are mostly domestic, "realistic", even fantastic - though never fever or whimsical; and the speakers are straightforwardly, hard-headed in touch with family and animal matters, mainly urban, or so the predominant imagery suggests. Some even sound almost street-wise. Metre and form are vigorous and varied, and there's a colloquial gusto in the language that any child out of the *For!* *Da!* phase will feel at home with. Most of the poems are dramatic-anecdotal and they lend themselves to performance: performance in the "portrait-satire" mode to which Pound mistakenly assigned *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Here's a touch of the real thing - Uncle Laurie, who "can't stop saying sorry", even when Auntie Dorrie "grabs him by the throat and screams." Stop apologizing!

My Uncle, who's a little deaf.
Says, "Sorry? Sorry, Dorrie!"
"For goodness' sake", Aunt Dorrie screams.
"Stop saying sorry, Laurie!"
Aunts and uncles can be good fun, and while there is tenderness in the fun here, and in the description of Auntie Jean's over-affectionate kissing style, there is also a bite which has the force of direct truth-telling for the young and for the older will evoke a smile of recollection, as acute discomfort is acutely recaptured: "All whoosh and spit/And crunch and squeeze/And 'Dear little boy! And 'Auntie's missed you!'. . . Please don't do it, Auntie./ PLEASE!"

"Greedysuits", though it falls a little flat at the end, has the marvellous refrain "The bigger the breakfast, the larger the lunch", and food is a well-represented theme throughout. Apart from close relatives, friends, and sisters' boyfriends, animals are the most shrewdly and funnily documented; Dave Dirt's dog, caught midway between imagination and reality, is the best thing in the book:

Somebody said, "It's that's its head,
It's for the ugliest dog in town."
Somebody said, "The darned thing's dead!"
"Don't be silly, it's upside-down!"
"It's inside-out! It's a sort of plant!"
"It's wearing clothes!" It's Dave Dirt's aunt!

"It's a sort of dressing-gown!"
The conflation of dog and aunt is superb.

A mongol-child and the lesson she teaches the healthy bored about fun, happiness etc. is the subject of the longest piece, for which I think the word is "heartwarming": an Aesopian excursion takes us into the world of moralizing sparrows; elsewhere there are distant echoes of Lewis Carroll, Walter de la Mare ("In the chilly evening/The sun is on its knees/Dying by the graves/Where their shadows freeze/And the dead are walking/Underneath the trees"), and the first Marianne *invisite* - here is "Cleaning Ladies' entire:

Belly stuffed with dust and fluff,

Looking it up

By Adolf Wood

ALAN ISAACS (Editor):
The Macmillan Encyclopedia
Macmillan. £14.95.
0 333 29134 4

As Harold Macmillan says in his foreword, this is Macmillan's "first attempt to produce a comprehensive general encyclopedia covering the whole field of human knowledge within the compass of a single volume". In comprehensiveness, at least, the new work seems to have succeeded admirably: dogged inspection of its contents over many hours has revealed few significant gaps in subject coverage.

According to the publishers, there are some 25,000 articles: these are alphabetically arranged. *The Macmillan Encyclopedia* is pleasingly functional in appearance, with headwords clear and fitting, neatly with the text, and the printing and binding of excellent quality. Given its considerable bulk, the volume is surprisingly easy to handle. At £14.95, it should find its way into many a home, office, school, library, or whatever other places the publishers have in mind for it.

But caveat emptor. There are shortcomings, inadequacies, inconsistencies here, to be found in the general approach and treatment as well as in individual entries. While the great majority of items which have been looked at pass muster, and no doubt the experience of the generality of the encyclopedia's users will be that their needs are well and efficiently served, it has rather too many faults for comfort, and is a considerably less distinguished work than one would be inclined to expect from the famous imprint.

Simple spelling errors which elsewhere could be allowed to pass are peculiarly damaging in a work of reference, however good the rest of

Learning by heart

By Eric Korn

The Old-Fashioned Thins Table Book
0 7062 4085 5
The Old-Fashioned Adding-Up Book
0 7062 4086 3
The Old-Fashioned Rules of Grammar
0 7062 4850 8
The Old-Fashioned Rules of Spelling
0 7062 3794 8
Ward Lock Educational. 50p each.

The interesting thing about these books is the fact of their existence - and the fact that Ward Lock expect to sell a quarter million of them this year, and to bring out further titles, including one on handwriting that, I imagine, will talk about Punctuality being the Politeness of Princes and Canker being one of Plants. There isn't, obviously, a great deal in he said about the contents. The Times Tables are printed in large type, extended from 1x2 to 12x12, contain no glaring errors and show an admirable, and in these relativistic days, an uncommon certitude. Nine times twelve, they aver, equals 108, with no makeshift rubbish about taking it to 108, or modern research showing that it approaches asymptotically to 108, or there being excellent reasons for asserting to the social consensus that it is 108. There is a total absence of references to *Tabula Rasa: towards the destruction of Mathematics* or to the latest critical article in *Nouvelles Revue* *Metaphysico-mathématique*.

Similarly, *The Old Fashioned Adding-Up Book* tells us in the most unambiguous manner that twenty-six and forty-two make six tens and eight units, with no space at all allowed to dissenting opinions, and no reference to number bonds, mapping, functions or operators. This of course is what the customers are paying for: the old familiar juice, the reinforcement of belief, the certainty that they will not be shown up by their offspring. But indeed the

Used cautiously, these handbooks will obviously be a great comfort to parents who feel threatened by French-without-tears, algebra-without-sweat, physics-for-fun, and the whole glue-sniffing, disco-dancing, space-invading modern thing. And Ward Lock can go on for ever, producing Old Fashioned Latin (with no medieval neologisms), Old Fashioned History (Kings and Queens from Ethelred to Whom God Preserve), Old Fashioned Religious Education (Thirty-Nine Articles and no damned ecumenism), or Old Fashioned Geography (Beograd is the capital of Servia).

the compilation and production of the encyclopedia; but one would wish that there had been less reliance on the computer and that it had been informed by more - the

comparison is hard to resist - of the maturity, humanness, and critical awareness combined with flair which make the one-volume *Columbia* such a remarkably good encyclopedia.

Used cautiously, these handbooks will obviously be a great comfort to parents who feel threatened by French-without-tears, algebra-without-sweat, physics-for-fun, and the whole glue-sniffing, disco-dancing, space-invading modern thing. And Ward Lock can go on for ever, producing Old Fashioned Latin (with no medieval neologisms), Old Fashioned History (Kings and Queens from Ethelred to Whom God Preserve), Old Fashioned Religious Education (Thirty-Nine Articles and no damned ecumenism), or Old Fashioned Geography (Beograd is the capital of Servia).

Used cautiously, these handbooks will obviously be a great comfort to parents who feel threatened by French-without-tears, algebra-without-sweat, physics-for-fun, and the whole glue-sniffing, disco-dancing, space-invading modern thing. And Ward Lock can go on for ever, producing Old Fashioned Latin (with no medieval neologisms), Old Fashioned History (Kings and Queens from Ethelred to Whom God Preserve), Old Fashioned Religious Education (Thirty-Nine Articles and no damned ecumenism), or Old Fashioned Geography (Beograd is the capital of Servia).

Into the sub-culture

BERNARD ASHLEY:
Dodger
Julia MacRae Books. £5.25.
0 86203 048 X

I'm Trying to Tell You
Kestrel. £3.75.
0 7226 5725 0

We all know, theoretically, that children operate in a sub-culture with its own rules, fears and brutalities. Bernard Ashley's distinctive quality as a writer has always been his ability to enter into that sub-culture, convincingly and unselfishly. Because the adults in his books - quite realistically - do not share that ability, his heroes have often been victims, triumphing ultimately in spite of their own weaknesses.

Simon however, in *Dodger*, is refreshingly stalwart. Although he is bullied at school and taken into care by well-meaning, uncomprehending social workers, he is sensible and stable, taking care of his father, Alex, a painter and sign-writer who has plunged into a deep and silent depression after killing his flighty wife in a car accident.

When he is taken into care, Simon meets Rose, a hard-bitten, self-sufficient girl of his own age. She and her uncle, who owns a battered fair-ground ride, arrange for the escape of Simon and his father, so that they can trade on Alex's skills as a painter to assure their chance of being booked for a fair. In this free and easy fairground

atmosphere, Alex is able to relax a little and start painting again, while Simon is at last free to investigate the true circumstances of his mother's death. Through his relationship with Rose, he comes to understand that his mother was not the blameless, idealized figure he had made of her.

It is a fast-moving story, sustaining its suspense until the rather abrupt ending. But what makes it remarkable is the sensitive delineation of relationships and atmosphere. The school Simon hates and the uneasy mood of the home where he is taken into care come across with the precision of reality, and Simon's protective but uncertain attitude to his father is subtly presented.

The strength of *Dodger* is underlined when one reads *I'm Trying to Tell You*, another new book by Bernard Ashley, for younger readers. Here, in what is in effect a collection of short stories, he presents four pieces, of writing ostensibly done by four different children. In one, a West Indian girl describes a family wedding which was important to her, but which will not make an "exciting story" for her teacher. In another, a girl writes home from a school journey. Her stilted, conventional letter to her parents is broken up by the more honest comments she makes in her letter to her friend. All four stories are elegantly written, with a good grasp of dialogue, but the incidents they describe are largely trivial. The book is very short and its ironic humour will appeal mainly to adults. Children are likely to find it more like a collection of

Gillian Cross

Fragments of history

By Ann Evans

BARBARA WILLARD:
The Keys of Mantlemass
Kestrel. £5.50.
0 7226 5699 8
Summer Season
Julia MacRae Books. £5.25.
0 86203 053 6

The Keys of Mantlemass is not, as one might suppose, a further story about the Medley and Mallory families in the iron-working forests of Sussex; it is more in the nature of an appendix to this remarkable series of seven novels in the last of which, *Harrow and Harvest*, the house of Mantlemass is burnt to the ground in the Civil War. In this latest set of ten separate stories, the author endeavours to "bridge some gaps and elaborate certain characters and incidents". As such it makes fragmented reading and should be an unnecessary book. Oddly enough, it is neither. So strong is Barbara Willard's sense of the past and so deep the reader's involvement that within half a page one is back in the dripping Wealden forests of three, four and five hundred years ago, caught up once again in the two Sussex families whose fate and fortunes one cares about with the intensity and warmth usually reserved for old friends. The final chapter, in which present-day descendants of Mantlemass try to piece together fragments of its history, could easily have been a disastrous anti-climax. Instead it is a superb example of Barbara Willard's craftsmanship and of her sensitivity towards her audience, for by letting the past withhold some at least of its secrets, she allows the reader, who grows them all, to be their guardian for all time. There could be no surer way of tempering the sadness of her final curtain or of immortalizing the entire Mantlemass saga. A note of warning, though: the suggestion in the publisher's blurb that "for those yet to enjoy the books, these stories are the perfect introduction", is better ignored.

Summer Season, by the same author, is a novel with a theatrical background. Nan Fane lives on small seaside resort in the south of England, where her mother, an actress, keeps a boarding house. In this particular summer of

1938, Lily Fane, overcome with nostalgia for the grandeur and glamour of her youth, fills up her rooms with a motley group of actors who have been engaged to do a summer season at the local repertory theatre. Nan is in a transport of excitement and delight: at last she has a ready-made entrée into the world she knows to be hers and at last she has the chance to solve the mystery of her father who left home when she was a baby and whom nobody will talk about, least of all her mother. The discovery that he was a seedy, second-rate actor and a drunkard leaves Nan shocked and desolate. Only Joyce - generous, feather-brained, irrepressible Joyce, fizzing with chatter about her Woolworth pearls and her boyfriends - can restore

Times past

GEOFFREY TREASE:
A Wood by Manallagh
And other stories
Chatto. £3.95.
0 7011 2575 6

Geoffrey Trease stands fascinatingly between one world of children's fiction and another amazingly different: the time gap being about fifty years. In the 1930s he was a pioneer opponent of storytelling marked, as he has put it, by ossified ideas and values. "On no account any hint of affection between the sexes", is the sort of advice that he gave. In 1930s publisher gave to a children's writer. The breakthrough into something approaching ordinary amusing human truth is partly due to Mr Trease's imaginative obscurity. So it's particularly interesting to read a collection of his short stories that stretch across close on forty years.

Seven out of the twelve are historical, and remind me very much of the work of another pioneer: Rhoda Power, who, like Mr Trease, set out to demonstrate that what had come to be thought of as a tomb, the past, had actually been full of live people. Usually the moment chosen for a story, by both writers, was one that brought together modest childhood and momentous adult activity. So young Ralph happens to be around unassuming to Holland when a conspiracy of old Cavaliers decides to assassinate Cromwell's ambassador. They realize that Ralph has overheard their plot,

and leave him bound and gagged: but a characteristic that Mr Trease shares with his predecessors, a refusal to allow any youngster to remain helplessly tethered, soon ensures that Ralph is on his way to foil the villains. Which he does by skating along the coals - the only way to get there first.

It's history that, within a somewhat obvious frame of story, is made really vivid by the author's delight in the pure rashness of childhood. It's perhaps this last that really makes him a writer for the young. He sees children as essentially mischievous creatures. In a story set in France in the Second World War, the hero is the village schoolboy whose naughtiness is seen in another light when turned against the Nazis.

Eyes shine, bronzed young men turn up at just the right moment: much of it is the old stuff splendidly in the service of the new. Nowadays it may be done rather more subtly; and the feeling that Mr Trease's stories sometimes give - that history was a perpetual twentieth century - may be studiously excluded. But he is such a good, lively teller of tales - and I suspect many readers may like best those set in the present and near-present - especially "Flit Wal-lab". This story, that sounds close to not being fiction at all, of the way a charming Untouchable in India is provided by a British soldier with his chance of social advance, is full of perhaps the most important quality Mr Trease all those years ago brought to children's fiction: a genial humanness.

Edward Disheson

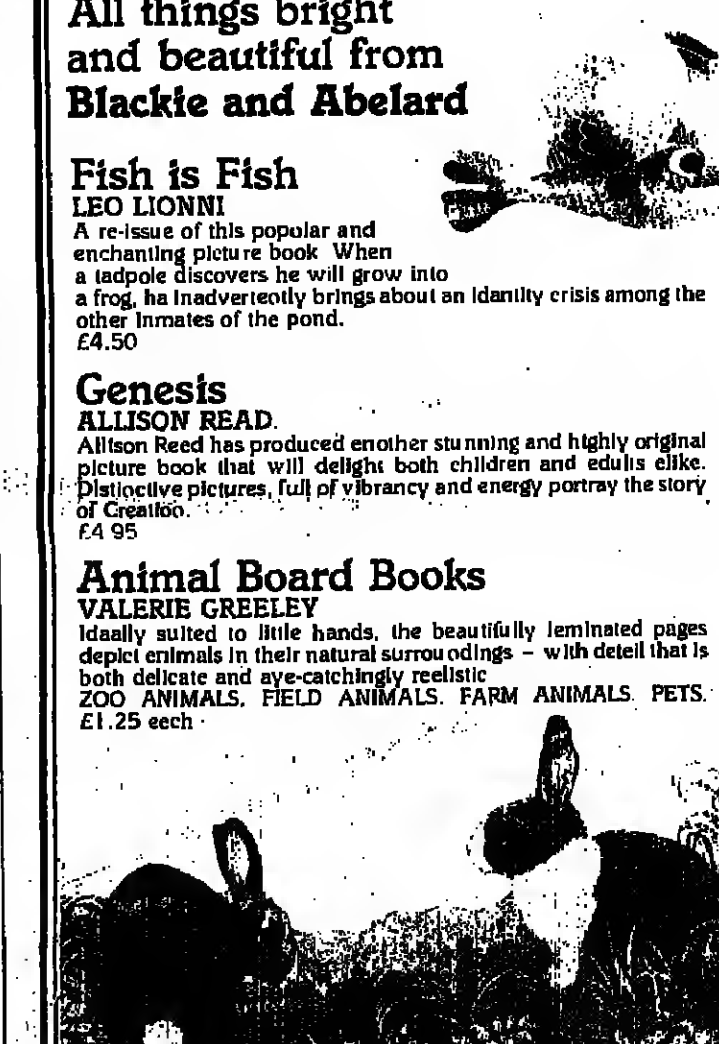
PETER DICKINSON
Winner of the Carnegie Medal for his 'City of Gold & other Stories from the Old Testament' £5.95
his now novel
'THE SEVENTH RAVEN' £4.95
'TESS'
THE STORY OF A GUIDE DOG
by Fay Godwin and Peter Purves
128pp with 110 colour photographs £5.95
Gollancz

All things bright and beautiful from Blackie and Abelard

Fish is Fish
LEO LIONNI
A re-issue of this popular and enchanting picture book. When a tadpole discovers he will grow into a frog, he inadvertently brings about an identity crisis among the other inmates of the pond.
£4.50

Genesis
ALLISON REED
Allison Reed has produced another stunning and highly original picture book that will delight both children and adults alike. Distinctive pictures, full of vibrancy and energy portray the story of Creation.
£4.95

Animal Board Books
VALERIE GREELEY
Ideally suited to little hands, the beautifully laminated pages depict animals in their natural surroundings - with detail that is both delicate and eye-catchingly realistic.
ZOO ANIMALS, FIELD ANIMALS, FARM ANIMALS, PETS.
£1.25 each



The book and the mind

By Brian Rotman

NICHOLAS TUCKER

The Child and the Book.
A Psychological and Literary Exploration.
1979.
Cambridge University Press.
Pp. 250.
£5.25 (hbk).

Until now, Nicholas Tucker tells us in his introduction, books on children's literature have been historical surveys, accounts of contemporary books and authors, or pedagogical studies. The others instead to consider

a previously rather neglected topic: exactly why are certain themes and approaches in children's literature so popular with the young, and what do possible answers to this question tell us about children and about many of their favourite books? Can the discovery of common factors in the plots or characters... help reveal their psychological needs and interests? Or looking at this relationship from another angle, can various studies in developmental psychology also sometimes explain why some literary approaches have always seemed more acceptable to the young than others?

"Developmental psychology" thus turns out to be a certain Piaget-dominated preoccupation with stages of cognitive advance, from Freud and Jung and a passing mention of Melanie Klein. The developmental approach encourages an ordering by chronology, and Tucker divides his account of children's books accordingly: First books (ages 0-3), Story and picture-books (ages 3-7), Fairy-stories, myths and legends, Early fiction (ages 7-11), Literature for older children (ages 11-14). The approach is empirical and descriptive - popular authors, tales, tendencies, subject-matter, and genres are all noted and briefly commented upon in terms that are intended to illuminate questions of their appeal and popularity. The style is fairly elegant and uncluttered and, insofar as judgments or conclusions or definite hypotheses are offered, tentative and much qualified. The result feels somewhat like a protracted tour round the children's section of an English school library by a well-informed but not very theoretically minded educationalist - lively for its variety and illustrations but lacking any thesis, framework, or substantive guiding principle that would enable the mind to retain or make much of the details.

The chapter on first books is entirely typical. It starts with the observation that the world is too much for the tiny mind and needs simplifying into clear bold unfussy simple shapes. Next a quotation from Sartre who thought that the illustrations in his beloved *Grand Larousse* represented men and beasts "in person", as opposed to real life where "you met vague shapes which more or less resembled the archetypes without attaining to their

perfection, in the Zoo the monkeys were less like monkeys, and in the *Larousse* the monkeys were less like men". Next some anatomical advice that cloth books are not a good idea (smudgy colour and indistinct shapes) when compared to glossy wipe-clean stiff-board books. Then the observation that small children do not understand perspective and prefer outlines and suggestion of objects without overlapping. Then a brief reference to Dick Hughes, still as an illustration, followed by the sensible but unstartling observation that "the scenes and figures of any picture-book can always have a double significance... both for what such things mean objectively, and also for what they come to signify to the child, in terms, for example, of safe or dangerous, pretty or ugly, nice or nasty, silly or sensible, funny or serious or one of the host of other judgments with which we monitor the world, but which children have to learn afresh". After this, nursery rhymes are introduced. Again sensible remarks are made about their diverse origins, their usefulness in preparing children for the rhythms of adult speech, the ease with which they can be enjoyed without being understood, their rooted sexual messages, their implicit violence (a nice materialist suggestion here in conjunction with *Rock-a-bye-baby*: "This contains a good example of concealed aggression often found towards the end of lullabies, inevitable perhaps when a mother's patience is beginning to wear thin"). Then infantile references to death. For the last Tucker offers in quick succession Jung (dreams and games about death stemming from the collective unconscious), Piaget (death as the major cognitive puzzle), and Gesell (death has no meaning for small children), but no mention of Freud or Klein or most surprisingly - given his rich and suggestive work on relating children's play to self and absence - of Winnicott.

The rest of Tucker's account continues in the same vein: long on example and short on theoretical awareness. Thus, for example, his reliance on a Piaget-centred approach is doubly unfortunate. To have a book devoted to children and literature underpinned by a psychological theory that is massively insensitive to the way language structure initiates and in some cases creates human thought is a bad idea. Particularly when the theory in question cognitively everything it looks at, reducing children's sense of the world to problems of cognitive competence (of a rigid and blinkered kind). For then, the slide into a patronization of children's imagination and their capacity to absorb and recreate experience in ways not foreseen by adults is irresistible. That such an over-simple and premature closure is clearly intended by Tucker is a measure of his lack of distance from his theoretical and methodological assumptions.

There is also an unexamined incoherence in Tucker's outlook. When this combines with his topism towards anything that is "popular", the result can be irritating: to spend ten pages on Enid Blyton's confections (and fail to

say anything that is not commonplace) seems an odd and self-indulgent pastime. And then when set against a passing mention of Aldous Huxley, and no reference at all to Arnold Lobel's tales for the very young or Frank Baum's Oz stories.

After his survey of the literature Tucker has a long chapter called "Selection, Censorship, and Control". This moves from interesting historical details of various glossings, bowdlerizations, deletions, euphemisms, and literary versions of covering piano legs and putting dogs into undertones to present-day problems of whether sexist employees, racial stereotypes, and ecological practices should be banned from books for children. Some of those early nineteenth-century dogs' head-quarters must indeed have shocked: the smugness of the Virgin Mary, an ass that excreted gold, and little white doves, pecking out the eyes of Cinderella's sisters are all from the Brothers Grimm. A shock quite different, though, from that left from Nazi propaganda for children like "Never Trust a Fox or a Jew". And while it may be legitimate to place the Grimms and Uncleb under the common rubric of "censorship", it seems unlikely that Tucker's liberal good sense ("Children's literature, however, will always be picked on more often than adult books for its possible bad effects, reflecting society's desire to produce future generations in the mirror of its own more positive values, but without its faults") will provide a vantage point from which to examine literary suppression and the related issue of how societies replicate themselves.

Indeed, in a society where the sign "books" means magazines catering for every kind of phallus (from pedo- to porno-), and "Adult" is a substitute for porn, the very phrase "Children's Books" is beginning to feel odd. If Tucker's carefully considered debate is put in the context of present-day children in the British Isles, the oddity increases. Such children inhabit an environment where every pavement, hoarding, railway station, piece of wasteland, and television screen contains advertisements which systematically infantilize, sexualize, and obsessively bombard them with the image of the adult male and his desires in the name of a good and unchallenged consumerism. In such circumstances, worrying about artistic integrity (whatever that now means) and the removing of patronizing remarks about paganism from a Roald Dahl story seems a bit like stopping the draft through the keyhole when the roof has blown off.

Of course, Tucker is not responsible for the growing irrelevance of children's literature to the way values and meanings are generated in our society, and in choosing to focus on books in the way that he has, his enterprise is a victim of larger forces. In some sense he knows this - his last chapter "Who reads Children's Books?" is a sobering account of declining readership which includes the statistic that Canada that the average student about to enter college may have seen more than 500 full-length films, and viewed some 15,000 hours of television but read perhaps only fifty books on his or her own initiative.

The craftsman's way

By Julia Briggs

NEIL PHILIP

A Fine Anger.
A critical introduction to the work of Alan Garner.
Collins, £5.95.
Pp. 100 (1980).

If any practising children's writer invites critical exposition, it is Alan Garner, whose work has always been deliberately paradoxical, allusive and on occasion obscure, though in his case such terms are a measure of strength as well as of limitation. He has progressed breathtakingly from the sub-Tolkien tales of his early years to the more complex and sophisticated work of his later years. His early work, though, from that left from Nazi propaganda for children like "Never Trust a Fox or a Jew". And while it may be legitimate to place the Grimms and Uncleb under the common rubric of "censorship", it seems unlikely that Tucker's liberal good sense ("Children's literature, however, will always be picked on more often than adult books for its possible bad effects, reflecting society's desire to produce future generations in the mirror of its own more positive values, but without its faults") will provide a vantage point from which to examine literary suppression and the related issue of how societies replicate themselves.

Indeed, in a society where the sign "books" means magazines catering for every kind of phallus (from pedo- to porno-), and "Adult" is a substitute for porn, the very phrase "Children's Books" is beginning to feel odd. If Tucker's carefully considered debate is put in the context of present-day children in the British Isles, the oddity increases. Such children inhabit an environment where every pavement, hoarding, railway station, piece of wasteland, and television screen contains advertisements which systematically infantilize, sexualize, and obsessively bombard them with the image of the adult male and his desires in the name of a good and unchallenged consumerism. In such circumstances, worrying about artistic integrity (whatever that now means) and the removing of patronizing remarks about paganism from a Roald Dahl story seems a bit like stopping the draft through the keyhole when the roof has blown off.

Of course, Tucker is not responsible for the growing irrelevance of children's literature to the way values and meanings are generated in our society, and in choosing to focus on books in the way that he has, his enterprise is a victim of larger forces. In some sense he knows this - his last chapter "Who reads Children's Books?" is a sobering account of declining readership which includes the statistic that Canada that the average student about to enter college may have seen more than 500 full-length films, and viewed some 15,000 hours of television but read perhaps only fifty books on his or her own initiative.

to inform. Sections of *Red Shift* recall both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, two highly determined novels whose theologies make small concessions to the vagaries of reality. The suspicion that there is a certain amount of deliberate obscurity in *Red Shift* is heightened by Turner's coded letters, published in the endpapers. Unlike Tolkien's, these letters, translated in his voluminous appendices, we cannot break Turner's code without knowing the code-word even supposing we have learnt from *A Fine Anger* what system is being used. Here and elsewhere Alan Garner reveals himself as something of a hermeticist, taking delight in creating puzzles, riddles, esoteric cross-references and allusions that will not reveal themselves on first, or even second, reading, defying the reader's desire to explicate them. Since the publication of *Red Shift* in 1973 in the author has gradually revealed in lectures and interviews something of the sources in history and prehistory, and the presence of underlying motifs such as the ballad of Tam Lin, information which would have enlightened his first readers considerably. Neil Philip draws on these, helpfully quoting an early account of the Haddonbury massacre and examining the background to the legends' bid for survival. A map or two would further have enhanced the value of this section.

One reason for the sparse and enigmatic quality of the writing in *Red Shift* is obviously artistic. An ideal of craftsmanship has driven Garner to pare down his text to essentials, a course followed by Kipling with his "draining" process, which involved shelving and then deleting extensively with a blue pencil. There are places where *Red Shift* seems to have been drained but dry. Neil Philip provides a persuasive, if not entirely convincing, justification of the love scenes, presented entirely in terms of dialogue. In his eagerness to avoid hackneyed terms for sexual encounters, Garner risks sounding as embarrassed as his adolescent hero, and his technique is in danger of promoting confusion. Reading between the lines, I had always assumed that at the book's climax, in rage and despair, rapes Jan in the castle, at once destroying his relationship with her and denying his identity with his gentler antecedents, Macey and Thomas, but, if Neil Philip shares this view, he certainly gives no indication of it.

From the outset his chief problems as a writer have involved the handling of plot and character, elements that many of his inferior imitators with ease. Even the brilliant *Red Shift* still draws on Celtic myth for its plot, though sharply observed dialogue is ingeniously used to create character here. *Red Shift* and the Stone Quartet, in abundance full-scale plot for epic, somehow counter on their characters the necessary freedom to act convincingly. Alan Garner's art, as demanding and self-critical, has learnt to disguise or overcome its own weaknesses and each book has shown a remarkable maturation and refinement of the craftsman's skills. Something of this progress is conveyed in *A Fine Anger* which, while not perhaps the key to all Garner's mythologies, nevertheless provides a serviceable guidebook to the highways and byways of this intriguing author.

How many walls has a doll's house?

By Inga-Stina Ewbank

A Doll's House.
The Other Place, Stratford

Immediately after the first night of the RSC's *A Doll's House* I could not get out of my mind the opening line of Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*: "The world is a stage, and the actors are all here". That the after-dinner was this, and not Hardy's world-famous statement of the idea of even her punishment "Hundred of thousands of women for 'millions' of Michael Meyer's translation have done it", is no negative criticism of the production. On the contrary, here is a *Doll's House* as convincing and as devastating as Donnie's trumpet call, reaching out not just to female emancipationists but to all whom... (ages, tyrannies, despots, law, chance) have defeated, and doing it by a most exciting use of actors and theatre space.

This production dispenses a number of things. First of all, it dispenses that *A Doll's House* is a dated thesis-play, that it survives only by the kind of spurious topicality reflected in several productions and two film versions a few years ago, on the crest of the women's lib movement. Adrian Noble's superb direction obviously springs from a belief in the play as a play, and he seems to have made his cast listen to the voice of Ibsen when, at the banquet given in his honour by the Norwegian Society for Women's Rights in 1898, he disconcerted his hostesses by disclaiming any connection with their cause: "My task has been the portrayal of human beings".

Secondly it disproves that theatrical realism must mean peeping in on a real-life situation through a missing fourth wall. Kit Surry's design preserves, on a signature of brown carpet, all those pieces of furniture and ob-

jects essential in defining the world of this play. Even the traditional porcelain stove is there, cut down to waist-height and marking one of the imagined corners of a world which, thanks to the structure and the small scale of the Other Place, is felt to be at once enclosed and exposed. Thus, through four removed walls, we are made to penetrate Torvald and Nora Helmer's doll's house and are held there, by direction and



Back to the wall: Marita Hunt, Midge Titherage and Henry Hallam in a 1925 production of *A Doll's House* in the Playhouse Theatre.

acting so sustained in details that, on a sweltering first night, Helmer's dangerous line "Phew! It's hot in here" tamed not one singer.

Thirdly, and perhaps paradoxically, this production dispenses any notion that the strength of the play lies in its realism, if by that we mean certainitude. The consequences of the production are the emblematic moments provided by Ibsen and here, not by a prose, exploited for

Treasuring the sheer theatricality of the piece (which is why it never, even in the potentially embarrassing monologues of third-act-outland, becomes melodrama). The cast leaves out of it an extraordinary mixture of fun, despair and defiance. The child does come in from the East. The live walls, straight out of a Carl Larsson painting, their hide-and-seek with Nora is interrupted by a Kristal (Herman Lloyd) who is more like a proto-orchestra than the traditional blackmailing villain, and whose personal motives have an Othello-like intensity: when Kristal left him for money, she came again. Marjorie Hain's Mrs. Linde is all subject, her still and beautiful face flattered by past tensions, and the almost shot-hall scene where she and Kristal meet each other makes sense as I have never seen it do before.

So does the scene where Dr Rank (John Franklyn-Robbins) and Nora virtually make love to each other through a dialogue about the goose liver, turtle, oysters and champagne which Rank's father consumed, with fatal consequences for his son's spine; for once the flesh-coloured silk-stockings are simply the climax of an erotic game. For once, too, the endgame when Nora, disillusioned and enlightened, sits down to talk to her husband, is the climax of the whole play. At the Criterion, eight years ago, Colin Blakely was a Torvald with gradually dawning perceptions, searching for a language to use to this strange new wife. At the Other Place Stephen Moore elicits the ubler of supreme, if well-meaning, selfishness to the very end, when suddenly his untouched public-school boy's face crumples and he sobs like the child he has taken Nora to be, unable to bear so much reality.

This scene, like the whole production, owes much of its life to Cheryl Campbell's marvellous Nora - her range and her absolute control. She moves in and out of her part as Torvald's "squirrel" and "lark", and through extremes of emotion, with a growing inwardness which makes her last stance seem inevitable. From the first ever production of *A Doll's House* in Copenhagen in 1879 - when a reviewer lamented that Ibsen had created a part which demanded an instantaneous transformation "from a little Nordic 'Frou-Frou' to a Søren Kierkegaard in skirts" - Torvald's transition has been a problem. Cheryl Campbell presents it as sheer dramatic logic.

What, then, is so good about this production is that it gives us what Ibsen's theatrical art, almost impossibly, asks for: careful ensemble playing, on the one hand, and an intense inwardness in individual characters, on the other. It gives us an Ibsenite world of tragicomic in which people can be unemittingly awful to each other while heroically searching for their own selves. Shaw thought that *"A Doll's House"* was as flat as ditchwater when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was still as fresh as paint; but it will have done more work in the world; and that is enough for the highest genius, which is always intensely utilitarian. The RSC production proves him wrong on every point except that of genius.

New Oxford books: Philosophy and Classical Studies

An Introduction to Plato's Republic

Julia Annas

The book provides a clear and systematic introduction to the *Republic*. It aims to make the *Republic* accessible and intelligible to those coming to the work for the first time, or with little or no philosophical background. The author has stressed Plato's desire to stimulate philosophical thinking in his readers, and the book brings out the coherence and interest of the main moral argument. £15 paper cover; £5.95 6 August

A Commentary on Livy

Books XXXIV-XXXVII
John Briscoe

Books XXXIV-XXXVII of Livy's history contain the narrative of the years 195-190 B.C. Like the author's early commentary on books XXXI-XXXIII, this volume pays particular attention to historical matters but contains rather more textual and linguistic discussion. Dr Briscoe has collected the principal manuscripts and when textual discussion is necessary he presents the first full statement of the evidence. £25

Greek Literary Hands A.D. 400-1600

R. Barbour

The aim of this series is to put before the student of palaeography, in summary form, the results of research over the last fifty years and to serve as a basis for further research work. Miss Barbour's two principal considerations in selecting the manuscripts for this volume have been that they must be explicitly or fairly clearly datable and that there should be at least one good example of every major style of writing. Illustrated £13.50 Oxford Palaeographical Handbooks

Menander Rhetor

Edited by D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson

To Menander the Orator are ascribed two treatises on oratory, probably by two different writers, which give rules for various kinds of speeches, such as encomia of countries and cities and addresses to emperors and other officials. This volume contains a newly edited text with critical apparatus, introduction, translation, and commentary. £35

Kant and the Transcendental Object

J. N. Findlay

This book attempts to analyse and interpret Kant's malapropos of transcendental idealism, with its distinction between those aspects of objects which have a meaning for knowledge, and those other aspects of knowledge which can only be referred to in an 'empty' formal manner, without empirical content. £17.50 6 August

Oxford University Press

Index of books reviewed

Joan and Gareth Adamson: <i>Toppy and Tim go to</i>	840	Nevill Lewis and Tony Ross: <i>Hare and Badger go</i>	841
<i>Physchool</i>	840	Arnold Lobel: <i>On Huckleberry Street</i>	841
Joan Aiken: <i>The Stolen Lark</i>	839	Jan Mark: <i>Hares in the Palm of the Hand</i>	839
Bernard Ashley: <i>Dodgem, I'm Trying to Tell You</i>	842	James Marshall: <i>George and Martha one fine day</i>	841
Harriet Barthelme: <i>The Lonely Kittens</i>	841	David McPhail: <i>Where Can an Elephant Hide?</i>	841
Gill Bond and Chris Austin: <i>Zoozy and Hazezy</i>	841	Chiyoeko Nakatani: <i>Feeling Babies</i>	841
Patience Brewster: <i>Elbow and the Cuts from Ales</i>	841	Alfred Noyes: <i>The Highwayman</i>	840
Kim Chester: <i>The Cyl War</i>	838	<i>The Old-Fashioned Times Table Book, The Old-Fashioned Adding-Up Book, The Old-Fashioned Rules of Grammar Book, The Old-Fashioned Rules of Spelling Book</i>	844
<i>Thimble</i>	841	Jan Ormerod: <i>Sunshine</i>	840
Donald Crews: <i>Truck</i>	840	Helen Oxenbury: <i>Family, Friends, Playing, Working, Dressing</i>	840
Gillian Cross: <i>A Whisper of Love</i>	842	Neil Phillips: <i>A Fine Anger</i>	840
David Cox: <i>Miss Brockle's Umbrella</i>	840	Susan Price: <i>Christopher Upside</i>	842
Ronald Dahl: <i>George's Marmalade Medicine</i>	839	Mary Rutter: <i>Mrs Pig's Bulk Buy</i>	841
Tomie De Fazio: <i>Oliver Button Is a Sissy. Fin McCall</i>	841	Maurice Sendak: <i>Outside Over There</i>	841
Peter Dickinson: <i>The Seventh Raven</i>	842	Carolyn Sloan: <i>Further Adventures of Mr Cragg</i>	841
Valerie Greeley: <i>Farm Animals, Field Animals, Pets</i>	842	Jan Strachan: <i>Moses Brev</i>	838
<i>Zoo Animals</i>	840	Geoffrey Trease: <i>A Wood by Moonlight</i>	842
The Brothers Grimm: <i>The Bremen Town Musicians</i>	840	Nicholas Tucker: <i>The Child and the Book</i>	840
Trinka Hakes Noble: <i>The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the</i>	840	Carmelo Sole Vendrell: <i>The Boy with the Umbrella</i>	841
<i>Washing</i>	841	Shigeo Watanabe: <i>Roady, Steady, Go</i>	841
Libby Hathorn: <i>Lachlan's Walk</i>	840	Barbara Willard: <i>The Key of Mauterliness, Summer</i>	842
Tatjana Hauptmann: <i>Adeline Schmitt</i>	840	<i>Season</i>	842
Lillian Hobbs: <i>Turtle Spring</i>	841	Gina Wilson: <i>A Friendship of Equals</i>	838
Fred Inghis: <i>The Promise of Happiness</i>	837-8	Kit Wright: <i>Hot Dog and other Poems</i>	843
Alan Isaacs: <i>The Macmillan Encyclopedia</i>	843		
Jim Kennermore: <i>The Middle of the Sandwich</i>	838		

Children's Book selection made easier

READING FOR ENJOYMENT

WITH 0-6 YEAR OLDS by Dorothy Butler
FOR 7-11 YEAR OLDS by Ann Barlow and
FOR 12 YEAR OLDS and up by Chris Koele
The new 4th edition of a successful
series of reading guides.

75p each or £2 for set of three from

BAKER BOOK SERVICES

Little Mead, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8NU
Tel: 04866 5444

Ask for free copy of CHILDREN'S BOOK NEWS

COMMONWEALTH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CHECKLIST

Over 800 titles of imaginative literature reflecting the backgrounds and cultures of children living in a wide variety of countries. The list will be of particular value to teachers and librarians working in multi-cultural areas. Price £1.00 + 25p p & p. Orders to: Shop Manager, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NO.

New chamber-pots for old

By R. V. Holdsworth

Eastward Ho
Mermaid Theatre

When Chapman, Jonson and Marston wrote *Eastward Ho* in 1605 they put in jibe against the new King's practice of sifting knighthoods, mimicked his Scottish accent, and recommended that the entire Scottish nation be shipped to Virginia. James did not see the joke. He banned the play, threw the authors in jail, and contemplated the removal of their ears and noses. Perhaps he was provoked, too, by the play's all-round cynicism, its simultaneous galling of citizen and upper-class virtue. Ostensibly upholding the two-way decencies of industry, duty, and thrift, *Eastward Ho* subverts them by making their representatives, the goldsmith Touchstone, his daughter Mildred, and his apprentice Golding, intercalary self-satisfied and proud. Yet the morality fares no better. Gertrude, Touchstone's other daughter, is ridiculed for aspiring to become "a wanton coy thing called a lady", and the decayed knight Sir Petronel Flash is portrayed as a venal fantasist, possessed by a belief that in America the chamber-pots are made of gold, and the people go shrimping for diamonds and rubies.

The Mermaid's latest response to the play fit has performed it twice before, in 1953 and 1962 is to offer a "musical adaptation" directed by Robert Cretwyn; and the result, even if one forgets about the subtle and witty comedy which is virtually obliterated in the process, is unbelievably silly and crude. In the opening song, in which the east announce "We are the

humours and this is 1605", the characters are introduced in turn: Security as "a money-lending freak who screws you right into the ground"; Sir Petronel as "a jaded aristocrat" plotting to get Gertrude's dowry "and hagger off to America"; Quicksilver as "a cross between Machiavelli and Fred Astaire"; and Gertrude, very impenetrably, as "a cross between Barbara Cartland and Fanny Hill". What follows is a high-camp pantomime, organized round a medley of set-pieces variously reminiscent of Gilbert and Sullivan, *Okla-Homa*, *Oliver*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*, with occasional pauses for laborious spellings-out of the plot.

Thematic point and consistency of character are constantly sacrificed to the score, so that there is no sense of the citizens' smug rectitude (instead, Touchstone sings a ponderous aria proclaiming that "Christian love is a tough love"), and Sir Petronel in his seduction of Security's wife is briefly transformed into a gallant romantic hero. Things pick up slightly in the second half, where the play is more confidently jettisoned. Here the four swans come together for a negro blues about their menfolk ("Transparencies are all you're left with in the end"), the prisoners sing "In the Counter" ("Every fetish is respected in the plot").

Faced with such hatching, it seems trivial to complain about the loss of Gertrude's footman, whose name is Hamlet, and whose first entrance is greeted with the rebuke "Sfoot, Hamlet, are you mad?"

The long lamented World Theatre Season is being revived in a new form, the International Festival of Theatre, in London from August 3 to 16. Among the companies taking part are the Grupo de Teatro Macu-nha from Brazil, at the Lyric; Hammersmith, two Polish groups - Teatr Proszowicki (at the CCA) and Theatre of the Eighth Day (New Hall Moon); Die Vaganten from

Germany, with a version of Goethe's *Faust* in the 'Tricycle Theatre'; the Tamagawa Dance and Drama Group from Tokyo, also at the Tricycle; and Greta Chute Libre from France, at the Old Hale Moon. Full details and tickets are available from the London International Festival of Theatre (Box UP), Buckingham Court, 78 Buckingham Gate, London SW1 1TL 01-222 48911.

commentary

The crushable and the crushing

By Hilary Spurling

Quartet
Various cinemas

It is not all fashionable these days to express doubts about Jean Rhys or the women she wrote about, so it comes as something of a shock to find Ruth Praver Jhabvala (who provided the screenplay for James Ivory's film of Rhys's first novel, *Quartet*) freely admitting that she feels some sympathy for either. But her detachment proves in fact one of the great strengths of this enigmatic film. Another is the casting of Isabelle Adjani as Marya Zelli, first in a long line of self-absorbed and woefully sensitive heroines, here played as a standing invitation to the sadists always lurking in abnormally large numbers in the Rhysian underworld. Pale, plump, passive, exquisitely crushed and crushable, Adjani with her big brown apprehensive eyes and quivering red lips embodies an unexpectedly sketched, even clinical approach to this supremely narcissistic writer.

It is only one of several shifts accomplished by Ivory and Jhabvala, who enthusiastically succumb to the temptation (nearly always irresistible to anyone who adapts or writes about Jean Rhys) to readjust the proportions in which she herself mixed fact with fiction. *Quartet* was published in 1928 and based on an affair with Ford Madox Ford, the book's H. J. Heidler (Ford had recently changed his name from Hueffer) who, with his wife's connivance, seduces, seduces, enchants and eventually ditches Marya while her husband is in prison. The film stops short of roving in Hemingway (model for the ineffectual, owl-eyed friend played by Jeffrey Wood) but goes far enough to credit Marya with her creator's West Indian background, and turn Alan Bates into an only slightly glamorized version of Ford in the

1920s: a figure both absurd and formidable, genial, faithless and inordinately attractive to much younger women in spite of perhaps because of his flat feet, had teeth, brick-red complexion and head "like Humpty Dumpty's except for the walrus moustache".

Perhaps more important is the way that *Quartet's* plot – the wife procuring girls to placate a husband who scrupulously preserves the public surface of their marriage for her sake – so closely resembles Ford's *The Good Soldier*, published nearly ten years before he so much as set eyes on Jean Rhys. Whether she was simply dazzled by Ford as a writer at the start of her own career, or whether his obsession with this particular situation had in fact spilled over from art to life, hardly matters. *Quartet* is the story of Marya's betrayal by Edward Ashburnham (another romantic projection of Ford himself) in *The Good Soldier*, seen through Marya's eyes; and the film exploits the fact to huge advantage.

It is not simply that the plot is heightened, telescoped, made more explicit, its reversals harsher and its revelations more drastic. The fiercest dramatic impact comes from the sense of corruption and duplicity seeping slowly across humdrum sunlit breakfasts in the Heidlers' luxurious apartment, or a cheerless shooting party in gilded nutcracker woods. Nothing in this film is more frightful to watch than the two Heidlers, taking a country drive with Marya between them in the trap and hardly a word spoken from start to finish. The whole moves steadily towards the spectacle of what Ivory himself, reviewing Kevin Billington's TV film of *The Good Soldier*, called "the English upper class... spinning out of control and crushing in a satisfying way, until the stage is littered with corpses and the survivors left to piece together the story for themselves".

Admittedly, *Quartet* ends in loss and desolation rather than malice and death, and the setting has moved from pre-First World War Germany to 1920s scenes for Billington's full dress interiors by Sergeant. But the elaborately calm surface, cracked and shadowed by horrors beneath it, is the same. Marya Smith as Lois Heidler in the nightgown, glittering in her sequined silver sheath and skullcap, is menace incarnate: remorseless, rapacious, hawklike, poised to sink her talons into the defenceless Marya who winces, as well she may, at the sardonic creak with which her hostess transforms a trip to Luna Park into a vision of hell: "We'll put Marya on the Joy Wheel and watch her being banged about a bit".

But the cry is as pitiful as it is cruel. What Ivory and Jhabvala have imparted is an alien umbrance, something altogether different from Jean Rhys's bleak and bitter clarity. Marya Smith's Lois seems in some lights as frail, vulnerable, shrinking as her victim, Bente's Heidler survives only by their stratagem of desperate complexity. Husband and wife in the end dominate the film as they do *The Good Soldier*. What remains, beneath the meticulously reconstructed street scenes, bars and nightclubs, the altered nature and desolation, is the sense that Jhabvala has said of a film that owes perhaps as much to Ford as to Jean Rhys: "What a terrible bunch of people they were, trapped in a terrible situation".

The Arts Council has just appointed four new members to its Literature Advisory Panel. Professor John Bayley, the poet David Harner, Catherine Freeman (a senior producer at Thames Television) and biographer Michael Holroyd take up some of the places left vacant, in the course of a troubled year, by Melvyn Bragg, Margaret Forster, Elizabeth Jane Howard, Graham Martin, G. W. Nicholls, Fraser Steel and John Whitley.

The surviving members of the panel are Marghanita Laski, who took over from Melvyn Bragg as chairman in the middle of the year; Liz Calder, Robert Gavron (a friend of a printing company), Miles Huddleston (publicity director of Constable), Philip Larkin, Isabel Quigley and Fay Weldon.

Given the bird

By Richard Osborne

Down by the Greenwood Side
Cottesloe Theatre

In the first volume of his *Early English Stages*, Glynne Wickham gives short shrift to the St George Plays, Robin Hood Plays and May King Games which were so popular with village amateurs and mummers in medieval England. Useful for raising small change for private use, they served no greater purpose, Professor Wickham suggests, than do carol-singers or the makers of guys in more recent times.

The on-stage ensemble takes its instruments from a verse in "The Floral Dance" – "We danced to the band with a curious tone / Of the cornet, clarinet, and big trombone / Fiddle, cello, big bass drum / Bassoon, flute and euphonium" – and is much given to exploitation of the orchestral raspberry. Father Christmas (David Roper) and Bold Slasher are more or less persistently greeted with ood fanfares and salvos on the timpani. Admirers of Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* may catch here and there an echo of that score's baleful, devil-may-care nastiness; but *Down by the Greenwood Side* is generally less ordered, broader, and less witty (an equestrian scherzo notwithstanding). At one point Birtwistle, with mock humility, acknowledges the fact by getting Father Christmas to tell the band to shut up; but when Dr Blood appears (a Sweeney Todd figure in striped trousers and a cure hat) to effect his miracle "cure" the music is wonderfully stilled as if in some comic inversion of a moment from *Wozzeck*. Elsewhere, Birtwistle, like Maxwell Davies, has the gift of being able to articulate the often angular and dissonant sounds of the natural world. No sound is dissonant which tells of life, says Coleridge in his discussion of the nightfall rook; and Birtwistle's score might be said by charitable and imaginative listeners to catch some sense of the mystery, menace and vigour of the woodland scene.

The new platform production at the Cottesloe, a 6.00 pm show which can be seen again on July 28, is vigorously and colourfully staged. It is a pantomime world where the work had its premiere more than a decade ago on Brighton Pier) and Birtwistle's own staging (helped by Stuart Hopp's movement and fight sequences by John Wilkinson) is properly vigorous and uncomplicated.

channel national self-doubt: football managers and cricket teams. Indeed, as St George was trounced by the blackmoor Bold Slasher (James Hayes) there was a clear sense of St George 0, Slasher 1. And after a nasty piece of underhand work with a curved scimitar it was St George 0, Slasher 2, with Slasher booked for ungentlemanly conduct.

In succeeding years, the Josephsons put two sons through college out of Matthew's freelance earnings, which were frugally spent. As a visitor to the farmhouse and to their last Village apartment, I can testify that the Josephsons were carefully comfortable but never in the limousine crowd, as Symons suggests.

So, it is untrue that Josephson's "greatest achievement was in having his cake and eating it too". Symons calls him "the perfect revolutionary simpleton" for having espoused the Left in the 1930s and for declining to recant in the 1940s.

Along with Edmund Wilson, Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos and Lewis Corey, Josephson was one of a group of some fifty writers and intellectuals to appear for the Communist Presidential ticket in 1932. He went on to oppose vocally the rise of Hitler and Franco. He was a very early (1933) perceiver of the antisemitic content of German Fascism and to speak out against the tortures of the Brown Shirts.

Matthew Josephson

Sir. – Matthew Josephson cannot, of course, reply to the attack on him by Julian Symons (June 26), which as nasty as it is unfactual. As one of Josephson's friends in the later years of his life, may I cite some corrective facts, which were available to Symons in the biography he was reviewing and which he omitted to share with your readers.

Symons offers a picture of Josephson as a "well-heeled" Left intellectual with a "standard of living which included a New York apartment and a country home in Connecticut". Josephson and his wife, Hannah, lived in several Greenwich Village apartments over the years, all of them small and, after the Second World War, rent-controlled. Their monthly rent rarely exceeded \$200. In 1930, the couple purchased 12,000 acres in the village of Sherman, Connecticut, a place inhabited also by Malcolm Cowley and Peter Blum, the painter. The Josephsons lived in a small but comfortable farmhouse, and it was bought with money left over from an inheritance. Six hundred dollars an acre is hardly a princely sum, even by 1930 standards, and it vitally exhausted the family savings.

In succeeding years, the Josephsons put two sons through college out of Matthew's freelance earnings, which were frugally spent. As a visitor to the farmhouse and to their last Village apartment, I can testify that the Josephsons were carefully comfortable but never in the limousine crowd, as Symons suggests.

So, it is untrue that Josephson's "greatest achievement was in having his cake and eating it too". Symons calls him "the perfect revolutionary simpleton" for having espoused the Left in the 1930s and for declining to recant in the 1940s.

Along with Edmund Wilson, Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos and Lewis Corey, Josephson was one of a group of some fifty writers and intellectuals to appear for the Communist Presidential ticket in 1932. He went on to oppose vocally the rise of Hitler and Franco. He was a very early (1933) perceiver of the antisemitic content of German Fascism and to speak out against the tortures of the Brown Shirts.

Josephson's attitude then and later was that to oppose poverty and social dislocation at home and Fascism abroad was nothing to apologize for, much less to recant. His autobiography *Infidel in the Temple*, unmentioned by Symons, contains his explanation.

I should add that Matthew Josephson felt reinforced by his decision not to recant his actions of the 1930s by observing the sorry course of many of those who did deny themselves and became informers for Congressional witch-hunters in the Cold War.

Symons seeks to make Josephson somehow ignoble because he "Turned Left" and neglected later to say he was sorry. Well, he wasn't sorry, nor should he have been. Josephson had many faults, some of which David Shi picks up in his academic vacuum-cleaner hagiography, but repentance for what he strongly regarded as virtue was not among them. If it was wrong to have been anti-Fascist, so be it. But, please let the record say, not for Matthew Josephson.

ALDEN WHITMAN.

Major's Path, Southampton, New York 11968.

Books and Society in History

Sir. – As a buttress to the recent interesting article by G. Thomas Tanselle in the *TLS* (June 5), I should like your readers to know that the Library of Congress, with sponsorship by its Center for the Book, will publish the papers of the Boston conference on "Books and Society in History". Those wishing to be notified when the volume is available should write to the Center for the Book.

JOHN Y. COLE.

Executive Director, The Center for the Book, The Library of Congress, Washington DC 20540.

Megalithic Art

Sir. – Stuart Pigott, in his interesting review of Elizabeth Sheu Twong's *The Megalithic Art of Western Europe* (July 3), says that "Colin Renfrew in 1973... demolished the thesis of the original origin of the Western European megaliths on the grounds of 'absolute' chronology alone". Surely both the date and the swiftness of the change in archaeological opinion are wrongly reported: Renfrew's *Before Civilization* (1973), to which Professor Pigott alludes, was less the storming of an academic citadel than a popular and *ex post facto* account of the gradual undermining of an entrenched position, a long-drawn-out skirmish in which Renfrew and others fought dogmatically from 1967 onwards. Renfrew's 1970 paper in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* made the major points of the 1973 book, and his divorcing of megalithic Stonehenge from its supposed ancestry in Mycenaean Greece appeared in the *Annals of the British School at Athens* in 1967. Both papers were based on the calibration of radiocarbon dates against a tree-ring chronology based on solar years (and hence compatible with east Mediterranean historical chronologies), published by Hans Suess in *Radiocarbon* in 1965: Renfrew was the first archaeologist astute enough to see the potential of the calibrated time-scale for back-dating part of European prehistory.

The west European megaliths were, however, already known to be far older than their supposed Aegean progenitors, on the basis of uncalibrated radiocarbon dates: at a lecture to the Society of Antiquaries on October 22, 1964, Glyn Daniel presented an "Absolute Chronology of the Megalithic of Europe" with an accompanying list of radiocarbon dates which he had assembled. These showed clearly that the megaliths of Brittany and the western British Isles were centuries older than those of Denmark and Iberia, with dates in the third millennium as matched only by the Maltese "temples". Even the earlier Danish and Iberian sites were substantially earlier than the historical dates for Mycenaean Greece. Glyn Daniel passed out copies of the date-list to all of his undergraduates for use, and the chronological picture was indisputable. The case of the north-west European megaliths, and those of Malta, over the superficially similar Aegean megaliths was a commonplace in the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge in 1964-65; the implications for European prehistory were certainly clear to those of us lucky enough to have been pupils of the late David Clarke at that time.

NORMAN HAMMOND.

Wholeyway, Harlow, Cambridge.

Foucault

Sir. – It is good to read so sympathetic and informative an account of Deleuze's and Guattari's *Millé Plateaux* as John Forrester's (July 3). This is all the more admirable in that Forrester has serious misgivings about the book. He is, however, less than fair to Foucault, twice mentioned as representing a pessimistic view of politics in contrast with that of Deleuze/Guattari. There is, I believe, no such contrast, and I think all three would agree on that. As Forrester points out, they share a belief in the ubiquity, all-pervasiveness, and inevitability of power relations, and reject a disorienting notion of change through totalized class conflict. But at this point, Forrester seems to believe, Foucault abandons himself to "stoical pessimism", while Deleuze/Guattari go off on to "something more positive".

This is to ignore two crucially important and original aspects of Foucault's notion of power: first, that it is not only negative and restrictive, but also positive and productive and, secondly, that wherever power percolates downwards (that is, everywhere), there is a commensurate possibility of reversal and opposition – not the totalized, centralized, unified opposition envisaged by the Marxists, but fragmented, localized, and linked, if at all, serially.

The difference between Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari, who are the first to recognize their debt to Foucault, is not a substantive one, but one rather of style. Foucault has always moved cautiously; Deleuze

and Guattari risk more and are more likely to fall flat on their faces. The reference to "optimism" and "pessimism" in relation to these thinkers is, in any case, misplaced, in my view, altogether too reductive of the type of totalized thinking that characterizes religions or systems like Marxism. John Forrester even seems to suggest that a certain naive taint attaches to "pessimism". I'm sure he doesn't intend it so, but this sounds frightfully like Soviet literary criticism. Anyway, I would have thought that misplaced "optimism" had caused enough horror in the twentieth century to make cautious scepticism a "healthier" outlook.

ALAN SHERIDAN.

Ashtree Cottage, Fen Ditton, Cambridge.

'Dying, in Other Words'

Sir. – With reference to Stoddard Martin's review of my novel *Dying, in Other Words* in last week's *TLS*, since the only thing Mr Martin seems to have noticed about the book is the plot, it is a shame he should have got that wrong in every particular. Felicity does not teach retarded children: he has confused her with Clara. Felicity is not fat. Clara is John does not leave his wife for Moira. Felicity does not drown in the bath: she burns to death. Mitchell had no intimate contact with Moira at all, though Mr Martin imagines that he took her virginity. Clothilde, at ninety, is certainly not studying to be an artist; this is put forward as her delusion. None of these characters smokes marijuana, and nor does its author, so that the "lost marijuana days" were in the head of the reviewer, where they seem to have muddled him up very thoroughly indeed.

As it happens, the book is not the random catalogue of sexual violence he suggests, but a novel about novels, a literary text. If "self-conscious" novels are *per se* bad, as Mr Martin implies, then authors like Nabokov, Borges, Vonnegut etc have been very lucky to get away with it for so long.

MAGGIE GEE.

5 Mornington Place, London NW1.

Modes of Interpretation

Sir. – The University of Leicester will be the venue for next year's conference of University Teachers of English, to be held from 14 to 17 April, 1982. Our theme will be "Modes of Interpretation": we have invited speakers whose approaches to interpretation represent a wide

The book reviewed by James Lasdun in last week's *TLS* should have been listed on the Contents page as a *House Under Old Sorum* by Joan Barton, and not *A House Under Strain* by John Barton as printed.

range of "modes": theatrical, feminist, historical and linguistic.

In accordance with the practice of other recent UTE conferences, we are also planning a series of seminars, on both the theory and practice of these kinds of interpretation. It is hoped that some at least of these seminars will be able to pick up issues raised by the lectures.

We should be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to conduct such a seminar. Obviously, we cannot guarantee acceptance of all offers: preference will be given to those whose proposals fit in best with the overall design of the conference and which lean towards the workshop rather than the mini-lecture.

I shall be happy to reply to suggestions and queries. Please send me the former by the end of September.

LOIS POTTER.

UTE Conference Committee, Department of English, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RL.

Hilaire Belloc

Sir. – May I use your columns to announce that I am at work on an official biography of Hilaire Belloc? If any of your readers have memories, anecdotes or manuscript material which they would like incorporated in this work, I should be very pleased to hear from them.

A. N. WILSON.

C/o A. D. Peters Ltd, 10 Buckingham Street, London WC2.

Admiral Lord Cunningham

Sir. – We are in the last stages of preparing a book based on testimonies of the war in Greece in the years 1940-41, including naval activities and battles in the Mediterranean during that period.

We would like to verify a testimony we received, according to which Admiral Lord Cunningham was shipwrecked in the second part of 1941 during a naval battle near Corsica and was rescued from the sea by a Greek sailor, who allegedly brought him ashore on a French-speaking island. Both rescuer and rescued were later transferred to Malta, the rescuer being later commissioned as an officer in the British Navy.

We should be very grateful for any first-hand information confirming the story. We would also welcome, with this opportunity, any other eye witness testimony covering the period 1940-41 relating to the Battle of Greece (including the Battle of Crete, May, 1941).

Kindly address your letters to Mrs Maria S. Fafalios, 36 Wildwood Road, London NW11.

C. N. HARDIPATERAS, MARIA S. FAFALIOS.

Get him to the church

By Julie Curtis

Marriage
BBC TV

The idea that Russian men find it hard to get out of bed is familiar to us from Goncharov's *Oblomov*, and it is a symbol for a type of ineffectuality and apathy which was to be explored lovingly by Turgenev and Chekhov in the later part of the century. It is, however, in Gogol's *Marriage*, which dates from the 1830s, that the image of *homo horizontalis* first makes its appearance. Podkolyosin lies on his divan and puffs at his pipe, loying with the notion of marriage. Suddenly his energetic – and unimpaired married – friend Kochkaryov arrives, urges him to get up, introduces him to a girl and dispatches her other suitors. But Podkolyosin loses his nerve as he is about to leave for the church, leaps out of the window and vanishes in a cab, presumably back to the safety of his single bed.

Out of this simple plot Gogol creates a farce with a sharp edge of satire to it. The message, ill-received by the first audicees in 1842, is that men enter into marriage solely in order to satisfy convention, social pretensions, erotic fantasies or mere financial interest. Agatya, the merchant's daughter who is the object of the suitors' rivalry, is no less ineffectual; she is determined to marry into a nobler level of society, but is otherwise so incapable of deciding between them that she has to draw lots.

Directors of the play have a choice between interpreting it as farce or as satire. Moscow was treated to a satirical reading bordering on the tragic in the well-mechanised 1975 production by Anisimov. Eros for the Malayay Brommoya Theatre. The imagery of the play centres on trade and Eros dwell on Agatya's humiliation by society (in theme directly evoked in Michael Simp-

son's BBC production in the glimpse of the caged bird which precedes our first sight of her). Eros also invented tableaux to expose the sexual frustrations of all the characters, creating over all a damning portrait of an idle and sterile society.

Not so Simpson's production, which takes the more traditional option of farce. This decision may in part have been prompted by the exuberance of Eric Bentley's new version of the play; gossamer rather than translating Bentley above all achieves zippy dialogue. Thus "Don't you tell me a whole lot of nonsense about the bride" becomes "Cut the cackle", and the ironic "I bet you've netted some fine ones in your time" appears as "Nice bunch of boobies!" Awkwardnesses, such as the anachronous reference to a "traffic smash", are rare. Bentley understandingly does not attempt a close rendering of the complex exchanges of proverbs and Biblical quotations between the eager friend Kochkaryov and Pyokla, the matchmaker whose role he assumes. Instead these are reworked, as in the following: "Once you've buttered your bread you've got to lie on it".

Dinah Stabb as Agatya is perhaps excessively gentle in contrast to the other characters, but she rolls her eyes very charmingly. John Wood is a splendidly limp Podkolyosin, well-matched by the restless energy of Gawn Grainger's Kochkaryov as he struggles, for reasons that remain obscure, to impel his friend to action. Amongst the suitors, Stratford Johns as the preposterous Mr Ormel is an agreeable surprise in a generally enjoyable and light-hearted production. After all, we don't want too much sex, politics or feminism. In the month of The Wedding, is there a guard on duty beneath the windows of the Palace. I wonder?

Commentary continues on page 853.

Among this week's contributors

GERALD ARRAHAM's books include *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 1980.

JANET ADAM SMITH's most recent book is *John Bunch and his World*, 1979.

FLEUR ACOCK's most recent collection of poems, *The Inner Harbour*, was published in 1979.

ROBERT BEATON is the author of *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece*, 1980.

ALAN BOLD is currently completing a book on twentieth-century Scottish literature and a critical study of Hugh MacDiarmid.

PATRICK BOWLES is a lecturer at the University of Paris VII.

GORDON BROTHERTON is Professor of Literature at the University of Essex. His books include *Latin American Poetry*, 1978.

RICHARD BROWN is co-editor of *The James Joyce Broadsheet*.

GEORGE CARNALL edited and completed John Butt's volume in the *Oxford History of English Literature, The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 1979.

RICHARD COMAS is editor of the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

SARAH COAKLEY is a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster.

JOHN COVENTRY S.J. is Master of St Edmund's House, Cambridge. His books include *Faith in Jesus Christ*, 1980.

DEMS DONOHUE is Henry James Professor of Letters at New York University.

DOUGLAS DUNN's new collection of poems, *St Kilda's Parliament*, will be published in the autumn.

INGA-STINA EWRANK is Professor of English at Bedford College, London. Her translation of Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* was performed by the National Theatre Company in 1976.

PETER FAWCETT is a lecturer in French at the University of Leicester.

D. K. FRELHOUSE is Smuts Professor Elect of the History of the British Commonwealth, at Cambridge. His books include *Economics and Empire 1830-1914*, 1973.

ROGER GARBITT's most recent poems are published in *Wall*, a collaboration between four poets and four artists on the theme of Hadrian's Wall.

VICTORIA GLENORNING's *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* is published next week.

ROBERT HALBRAN is Professor of English at the University of Illinois.

HAROLD HORSBORN is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

R. V. HOLOSOWORTH's edition of Jonson's *Epitaph* was published in 1979.

MICHAEL IRWIN is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Kent. His recent books include *Picturing: Description and Illusion*, in *The Nineteenth-Century Novel*, 1979.

HUOI LLOYD-JONES's most recent book is *Collected Essays on the Classical Tradition*, 1980.

CHARLES MAOOE's *Inner City, Poverty in Paris and London*, in collaboration with Peter Wilmet, will be published later this year.

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN's *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* has been awarded the Duff Cooper and the James Tail Black Prizes and the Royal Society of Literature's Award.

PHILIP MASON's recent books include *Kipling: The Glass, The Shadow and The Fire*, 1975, and *Skinner of Skinner's Horse*, 1979.

WILFRID MILLERS's *Bach and the Dance of God* was published earlier this year.

RICHARD OSBORNE is a regular contributor to *Gramophone*.

NESTA ROBERTS is the author of *The Face of France*, 1976.

FRANCES SPALDINO's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

HILARY SPURLING is the author of *Why Young: the Early Life of Compton-Burnell*, 1974.

ALABRIC STACPOOLE OSB is Master of St Benet's Hall, Oxford.

HUOI WILLIAMS's collections of poems include *Love Life*, 1980.

PHYLLIS WILLMOTT is currently working on a comparative study of unemployment in Britain, Germany and France.

JEAN WILSON's *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* was published last year.

to the editor

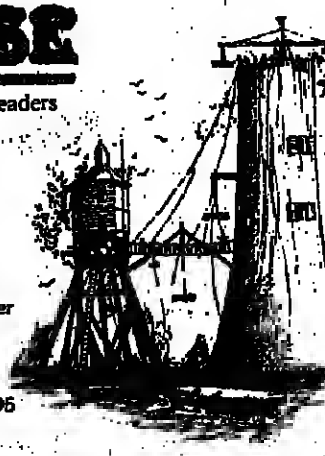
A first-class tale that older children will love. Like all good stories it is all the better for being based on a real character, Jamie. *Manchester Evening News*

THE LIGHTHOUSE BOY

A novel for younger readers
CRAIG MAIR

"Offers sharpness of observation and clarity of heart in a picture of the building of the Bell Rock lighthouse off Argyll, in the early 1800s under the direction of the admirable engineer Robert Stevenson, grandfather of Robert Louis. The standpoint is that of a boy, Jamie, a big, strong lad whose drunkard father has been press-ganged and who supports his mother and sister by working in the supply vessel and on the rock light." *Daily Telegraph* 0 7195 3824 6 Drawings by Ray Evans £4.95

JOHN MURRAY



sometimes inscribed to the Edgeworths by their authors, and occasionally are dated 17, 18 or 19 June, 1817. News of annotations to the text or of page numbers written inside the back covers (to mark special passages) would be particularly welcome.

Donald K. Adams.
152 South Clark Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90211.

Nina Hamnett (1890-1965), painter/writer: as the executor I am writing the official life of my aunt, Nina Hamnett. I urgently need information regarding the whereabouts of letters, paintings, drawings, manuscripts, photographs, and any other material including reminiscences of the artist and her circle.

Edward Booth-Clifford.
Nash House, 12 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH.

Dame Agatha Christie: correspondence relating to her life, for the authorized biography. All material will be carefully handled and promptly returned.

Ronald Morgan.
25 Church Row, London NW3.

Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning: for a reconstruction of their library I will be pleased to learn the whereabouts of Browning-associated items. Works presented by the poets are being included.

Philip Kelley.
PO Box 213, Arkansas City, Kansas 67005.

Katherine (Kay) Burdick: any information about her life and work (published under her own name and pseudonymously); letters, manuscripts, etc.

Daphne Patai.
Dept of Comparative Literature, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass 01003.

Richard Lovell Edgeworth

Mixtli impressions

By Gordon Brotherston

GARY JENNINGS:

Aztec
754pp, Macdonald. £7.95.
354 04635 7

The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was hardly renowned for his curiosity about American Indians. Yet there is no incoherent reason why in 1529 he should not have issued to Zumarraga, then bishop of Mexico, the request which prompts Gary Jennings's novel: "That we be better acquainted with our colony of New Spain... we order that you shall inform yourself from ancient Indians as to their country's history, their governments, their traditions, their customs etc." To satisfy this curiosity Zumarraga employs an old Aztec, Mixtli, to tell all he knows, sending the results back to Spain in twelve instalments along with explanatory letters of his own. In fact the whole of *Aztec* consists of ostensibly authentic documents, pieced together to provide a first-person account of

Mexican life between the years 1466 and 1531 AD - Years 13 Rabbit and 13 Reed in the Aztec calendar.

Over this period, and at the leisurely pace afforded by the book's seven hundred-odd pages, we follow Mixtli through the most various estates and conditions, in "The One World" (an Aztec name for their empire). Born the son of a quarryman on the island Xaltocan, Mixtli gains the privilege of an education at Texcoco ("the Athens of Mexico"); then, after serving the Aztec emperor across the lake at Tenochtitlan, he travels as a *pochteca* along the eastern tribute road to Oaxaca and Xoconochco. After marrying he travels as a trader in his own right, crossing the western frontier into Michoacan and on up into the northern fastnesses of the Tarahumara. He also goes off on an archaeological search for the old Aztec homeland Aztlan (invoked nowadays, though with scant geographical precision, by the Chicanos). In the final two instalments of his narrative Mixtli encounters the Spanish invaders, first as an ambassador and then as the dispossessed citizen who ends up telling his story to Zumarraga.

The Mixtli/Jennings narrative does not always update the highly-coloured version of the Aztecs and their invader Cortes, first propagated in English by W. H. Prescott. In the highland valley we find the same opposition between "civilized" Texcoco on the last bank of the lake and the "upstart" Tenochtitlan on the west; and we catch the same whiff of nostalgia for the noble religion of the "vanished" Toltecs. Yet for the most part the perspective in *Aztec* is quite new, like that of Carlos Fuentes, whose no less weighty historical volume *Terra nostra* focuses on the same epic encounter with Cortes. Throughout, Jennings has drawn heavily on recent research on Mesoamerica and the Aztec world, the better to show how its peoples once lived, talked, ate, worked, coped, cleaned their teeth, travelled, smoked, hallucinated, fought and died. As if to compensate for the dearth of his kind of detail in the past, we are regaled with a mass of domestic and regional minutiae.

In terms of how Jennings has chosen to narrate mid structure his novel, the most interesting thing about Mixtli is the fact that he is a post-scribe, one trained at Texcoco in the rhetoric of spoken Nahuatl or Aztec, and in the iconography and syntax of native script. For much of the novel's power stems from Nahua sources transcribed into the alphabet after the Spanish invasion, not just the direct quotations from Nahua poems and of set pieces (like the midwife's prayers for the new-born), but the whole range of devices used by Mixtli to keep his audience alert.

What "But now, what am I to say? What should I cause your ears to hear?" he echoes the mining courtesy of the Aztec priests who defied the Twelve Franciscans sent by Charles V in 1524 ("And now what? How is it, what are we supposed to say, what shall we present to your ears?"). And in telling each episode of his story, Mixtli offers us brilliant and clear-contoured images that are shown to derive from the Mexican script he once wrote in and which can be seen in the native screenfold books that survive in libraries today.

The immediate post-war setting is important: we see something of the increased affluence and the loosening of family restraints which allow young teenage girls to recognize and exploit their sexual attractiveness in short to become Nabokovian "nymphets". At the same time a nineteenth-century notion of prolonged, essentially innocent childhood continues to prevail, affecting in particular Henry, whose emotional and sexual development has been

All at sea

By Peter Norman

RAYMOND KENNEDY:

Columbine
378pp, Collins. £7.95.
0 00 222142 X

Any novel which centres upon an older man's sexual obsession with its eponymous pubescent heroine invites immediate comparison with Nabokov's *Lolita*. Unfortunately, any such novel is also likely to suffer from being held up to that remarkable work, and in this case Raymond Kennedy's linguistic resources are no match for the baroque glitter of Nabokov's prose. It must also be said, though, that *Columbine* is far from being purely exploitative, and that excitable critical comments of the "... makes *Lolita* look like *Little Women*" variety would be quite inappropriate. It is a very restrained book, modest in every sense of the word.

Columbine Kokoriss is the thirteen-year-old youngest daughter of a Lithuanian couple in post-war middle America. Henry Flynn is the boy next door, ten years her senior, a diffident young man who has had inconclusive attachments with each of her three elder sisters, interrupted by wartime service in the US Navy. He begins to realize that he has been working his way down to Columbine, and that it is she who has interested him all along. Precociously smart, she encourages his interest and an uncertain relationship develops, which Kennedy invests with a vaguely portentous, mythic quality, symbolized by her use of Henry's middle name, Starbuck, rather than his prosaic nickname, Herky. Eventually, however, frustrated by their inability to define and consummate their relationship, Henry and Columbine seek alternative means of losing their virginity, he to an aggressively lustful older woman and she to a local roughneck.

The immediate post-war setting is important: we see something of the increased affluence and the loosening of family restraints which allow young teenage girls to recognize and exploit their sexual attractiveness in short to become Nabokovian "nymphets". At the same time a nineteenth-century notion of prolonged, essentially innocent childhood continues to prevail, affecting in particular Henry, whose emotional and sexual development has been

relied by his naval years at a RN base in the South Pacific. There, while his peers gained valuable experience with Polynesian prostitutes, he apparently spent his days picking up peculiarly British expressions such as "I'll tell you this, Herky old hat, it's a sticky business." He is ill-equipped to deal with subtlety; the ambiguous complexity of his parents and Columbine's own meddling attempts at seduction make him constantly blowing hot and cold leave him bewildered, and he drifts helplessly into an impossible situation.

In many ways *Columbine* reads like a first novel, although in fact Kennedy has had two published previously in America. There is often a touch of creative writing-class self-consciousness (the dust-jacket boasts that the author was taught by Ted Hughes at the University of Massachusetts), especially in the early chapters, which contain many lapses of tone. There are a number of irritating repetitions (*Columbine's* *be* is described as being "like porcelain countless times"); laboured allusions ("... sentiments, Henry thought, that would have done honour to Thibide, that would have befitted the likes of Isolde, or even of the incomparable Juliet herself"); and embarrassing periphrases ("he ministered to his own needs and the gate purification to his troubled spirit"). Both mean that he masturbated. An identification of Henry as the Huckleberry to Columbine's *Columbine* is hinted at, but not developed.

Kennedy is an author, in fact, who impresses most not when he is trying to impress but when he allows his plain, unforced style to work freely. He has a good ear for dialogue, and the minor characters are beautifully drawn - particularly Henry's father, an ignorant, opinionated cop, and the redheaded, "Sally" Sullivan, whose bizarre taste in clothes is lovingly dwelt on. The novel grows steadily in strength and assurance, and only a weak coda which explains what happened to Henry in later life mars the final effect.

Recent fiction reprints in hardback include Paul Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky*, first published in 1949 (304pp, Peter Owen, £7.95, 0 7206 0587 3), D. E. Charlwood's *All The Green Year*, 1965 (183pp, Angus and Robertson, £6.95, 0 207 14195 9) and R. C. Hutchinson's *Johanna at Daybreak*, 1969, (314pp, Michael Joseph, £6.25, 0 7181 0443 9).

Enfant terrible

By Sally Ramsey

BARBARA HANRAHAN:

The Frangipani Gardens
224pp, University of Queensland Press, £5.75.
0 7022 1563 5

John Clare's exhortation to his reader to journey "through the valley depths of shade of night and dark obscurity" may provide a fitting preface to Barbara Hanrahan's latest novel, but the presiding genius, whose work illuminates and clarifies the world of *The Frangipani Gardens*, is Verlaine. Essentially, the novel is an admirably sustained *roman à l'enfer* with all the impressionistic mystery and costumed glamour of its French counterpart, combined with that same concentration upon the seam of perversion and vice that threatens continually to topple the character. The character is the changeling, Kathleen Kathleen ("Gillie") O'Brien, abnormally small but of considerable exotic beauty, who, with her alarming mixture of guileless innocence and twisted eroticism, finally recalls "L'implacable enfant/Prétre of relevant/Ses jupes" of the Verlaine poem. The action of the novel traces the inevitable shift from innocence to experience. So, the estate known as Flower Hill becomes The Frangipani Gardens, and its natural

simplicity turns into "something strongly-scented with a sweetness that suggested decay". Gradually, this toxic mixture of sweetness and decay tortures and entraps the more vulnerable character and an imminent and tragic dénouement is foreshadowed.

The pervading atmosphere of fantasy is upheld by the dream-like quality of much of the action, by the sing-song, rather childish idiom through which the events are unfolded, and by the disconcerting array of haunted individuals with their suggestive, semi-alliterated names (Fido, Garmet, Cockle, Swells, Peat, Gillie and Boy). All serve to create the impression of a distorted, quasi-mythical world where hatred and cruelty dominate and where "monsters of impety" are the norm. Underlying this, however, is a satirical sense of an actual country. It is the conflict between these two worlds and the souls who represent them that frames the ensuing action. Thus, whereas Gillie represents the darker of the two states, the visionary, epileptic boy, Tom, provides the greatest threat to the forces of evil. Consequently, his life is endangered; but so are the lives of all who share in his torment, since evil must ultimately prey on itself.

"You stuck your pint into your little clay dolly and hated, hated. And all the time evil came closer - to you." Eventually, relief comes from an unexpected quarter and innocence is protected. But any sense of triumph is short-lived since Hanrahan's sense of

Desolation and development

By Roger Garfitt

TED HUGHES:

Under the North Star
Drawings by Leonard Baskin
47pp, Faber. £5.95.
0 571 11721 X

TERRY GIFFORD AND NEIL ROBERTS:

Ted Hughes: A Critical Study
288pp, Faber. £9.50.
0 571 11701 5

EKBERT FAAS:

Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe
232pp, Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, \$14 (paperback \$7.50).
0 87685 460 9

STUART HIRSCHBERG:

Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes
239pp, Portmanmark, Co. Dublin: Wolfhound Press. £8.50.
0 905473 50 7

There is a moment in John Cowper Powys's novel, *The Prince of the Desert*, when the natural scientist Roger Bacon contrasts himself, as someone who "in his own spirit was always aware of the presence of an almighty force behind the whole panorama of experience, behind the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds..." with his colleague Pierre of Picardy. He reflects that

there was always something... that frightened him about his friend's attitude, for it struck him as reducing not only his own life, as he knew it himself, but the lives of all other entities as they knew them themselves, the lives of insects, such as midges and moths, the lives of plants and trees, the lives of worms and serpents, the lives of fish in the sea, birds in the air, the lives of the beasts of the forest and field; reducing in fact all these lives to the level of lonely, desperate, lost souls, clinging to each other in a boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness...

It is one of many passages in the novels in which Cowper Powys registers a profound historical shift of consciousness, from a religious to a scientific world view. The world of Friar Bacon's worst imaginings is strikingly similar to the imaginative universe of Ted Hughes, first defined in "Pibroch" and has inhabited ever since:

Over the stone rushes the wind
Able to mingle with nothing,
Like the hearing of the blind stone
Itself.
Or turns, as if the stone's mind came
Feeling
A fantasy of directions.

Drinking the sea and eating the rock
A tree struggles to make leaves -
An old woman fallen from space
Unprepared for these conditions.
She hangs on, because her mind's gone
completely.

The difference is that Ted Hughes is writing on this side of that historical shift. He is a poet of evolution, concerned to articulate and make habitable a post-Darwinian universe.

Such profound changes take generations to work through to acceptance, and the new forms of thought never entirely displace the old. Hughes is only just this side of the imaginative divide. The terror of the situation is still upon him, freshly to be confronted in poem after poem. So in his new collection, *Under the North Star*, "The Musk-Ox" finds that

The stars are no company.
They huddle at the bottom of their oceans,
only just existing,
Jostled by every gust.
Pinned precariously to their flutters of
light.

Tense and weightless, ready to be
snatched away into some other infinity.
And the broken tree-dwarves in their
hollow, near him,
Have no energy for friendship, no words
to spare.
Just hanging on, not daring to think of the
sucking, and bottomless emptiness of the
last
Thergrabs at their nape, and pounds their
shoulders.

This is a wasteland. But here again
there is a difference of generation.

Whereas Yeats and Eliot and David Jones all lamented, in their different ways, the breakdown of an imaginative order, Hughes takes that breakdown for granted. As he implied in his 1971 *London Magazine* interview, it is the foundation of his vision:

What Eliot and Joyce and I suppose Beckett are portraying is the state of belonging spiritually to the last phase of Christian civilisation, they suffer its disintegration. But there are now quite a few writers about who do not seem to belong spiritually to the Christian civilisation at all, in their world Christianity is just another provisional myth of man's relationship with the creator and the world of spirit.

Or, to put it another way, it is "on a heathery moor" beside "a rufous church", in a setting very reminiscent of Eliot's "empty chapel..." in this decayed hole among the mountains, that the protagonist of *Cave Birds* finds his weapons. A wasteland is what the imagination has to work with. The landscape of "Pibroch" is "neither a bad variant nor a trout." This is where the staring angels go through. This is where all the stars bow down.

Such a universe will never be easy to inhabit; but in Hughes's work it is convincingly inhabited by many different orders of creation, from the transformed hero of *Cave Birds*, whose odyssey of death and rebirth culminates in an experience of "lightness beyond lightness releasing me further", to the undemanding Musk-Ox of *Under the North Star*, whose stasis in a bleak universe is his strength:

He's happy.
Bowed beneath his snow-under lean-
to of horns.
Hunched over his nostrils, singing to
himself.
Happy inside there, bent at his hearth-
glow
Over the simple picture book
Of himself
As he was yesterday, as he will be
tomorrow...

Under the North Star is itself "a simple picture book", originally conceived as an entertainment for a child. No new energies are released

here, of the kind that made *Scout Songs* a small watershed in Hughes's development. For the English reader, who has hitherto known Leonard Baskin's work only in black and white, the subtle, luminous colours of the drawings are likely to be the book's major discovery. But as "The Musk-Ox" shows, even these minor poems proceed from a central, controlling vision. The poem's affection is married to its perception. It is only, *pace* Roger Bacon, the coldness of the one that makes possible the warmth of the other.

Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts make the point, in their excellent new critical study of Ted Hughes, that "for Ted Hughes the vocation of being a poet is bound up with the subject-matter of his poetry in a way that can only be paralleled in a devotional poet". Once the relevance of his vision is grasped, the animal poems are seen to be rather more than animal poems: "For him the animal is not merely an analogue or emblem of the inner self but a part, with that self, of an indivisible whole." The chief limitation of their book is that they do not see Hughes's vision in its historical context, and therefore convey no sense of the pressure under which that vision has been formed. As a result, Hughes's concerns are made to seem rather more abstract than they are. At one point in their discussion of *Crow*, for instance, they suggest that "the psychological need for man to people the universe with his own conceptions is parodied with acute perception, in 'Owl's Song' owl rejects fictions about material reality, but then hears himself imposing on the universe his own 'clawrock of star' and 'wingbeat of rock'." That is accurate, as far as it goes. What is missing is the dimension of terror which is also, ultimately, the source of wonder. For the landscape of "Owl's Song" is essentially the landscape of "Pibroch":

The air gave up appearances
Water went deliberately numb
The rock surrendered its last hope
And cold died beyond knowledge
The moment on which the poem
pivots is owl's heaving his own song
start up out of that landscape:

He sang
How everything had nothing more to
love
Then sat still with feet
Seeing the clawrock of star
Hearing the wingbeat of rock
And his own singing

His song terrifies him, as an ineluctable, even predatory force. But it is a wonder that it should exist at all. It binds him to continuance, and that is affirmative. The terror and the affirmation are one.

Similarly, in their discussion of *Remains of Elmet*, Gifford and Roberts do not quite catch the evolutionary rigour of Hughes's perspective, though they come close to it in writing of "a densely suggestive language that can relate social to natural processes in the timescale of a landscape." They miss completely what one might call the positive desolation of poems like "These Grasses of Light" in which the landscape becomes "The armour of blue-bruise/To which your soul's child/Clinging with all its courage". Consequently they are not able to place the "adventure" of poems like "Hill Walls". For the only time in two hundred and eighty pages, they have recourse to a vague phrase, writing of "a sense of exhilaration that is the living spirit of the book." What they have failed to establish is the frame of reference which could identify that exhilaration as the soul's courage, its terror overcome.

Desolation is a keynote that has to be struck in any proper discussion of Hughes. But it is no more than a keynote: there is also the crucial matter of development. The great value of this new study is that Gifford and Roberts firmly establish the positive nature of Hughes's development, within carefully drawn limits. That is no easy task, because, again for historical reasons, the positive side of Hughes's imagination is also the more obscure, or rather the more occult. The desolation, the soul's rude awakening to "a boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness" is thoroughly Western, and very much of this century. The other

side of Hughes's imagination, his perception that, as Gifford and Roberts express it, "the world of spirit and the material world are the same", comes much closer to the vision of primitive religion. Hence Hughes's interest in shamanism, in *The Golden Bough* and *The White Goddess*, in the Egyptian and the Tibetan Books of the Dead, in hermetic and alchemical texts.

Little of this enters the poems as direct reference - Hughes has always eschewed what he calls "scholarly pedantic baggage". But it does influence the way the poetry works. It is useful, for instance, in understanding the hero's encounter with the illusory heaven of "A green mother" in *Cave Birds*, to recall, as Gifford and Roberts do, "the repeated warnings in the *Thetis* book of the *Dead* that the various deities encountered in the Bardo state are illusions created out of the dead person's 'thought-forms'." ("This illusion", in other words, "offers us a redemption a return to the state of complacency with which he started." Or again, the resolution of *Cave Birds* in "Bride and groom lie hidden for three days" can be appreciated without any outside reference: but it enriches one's understanding to take a hint from the subtitle, "an alchemical cave drama", and to see the poem in terms of Jung's writings on alchemy as the transformed hero's marriage with his *varior mystica*, his integration with his other self.

Gifford and Roberts have followed Keith Sagar's example in reading widely so as to illuminate Hughes's work. They have avoided the temptation, to which Ekbert Faas falls prey, of becoming Hughes's exegetes rather than his critics. They develop an argument which highlights the weaknesses as well as the strengths of *Crow* and *Gaudeamus*, and which proposes, rightly in my view, that *Cave Birds* is his most substantial achievement to date. Similarly, they use to good effect their reading of Hughes's limited editions and uncollected poems, and are not afraid to take issue with his editing of his own work.

"Adam and the Sacred Nine", for instance, is published in *Moortown* as a sequence of twelve poems. The original Rainbow Press edition included five additional poems which "had a narrative function and elaborated on Adam's state". Gifford and Roberts mount a strong case for retaining at least two of these, the two which immediately preceded the final poem. The first of them ends

Light smiled
And smiled and smiled
Eyes
Darkened
Afraid suddenly
That this was all there was to it.

Gifford and Roberts point out that "the last line is important for an understanding of Adam's eventual achievement. When, at the end of the sequence, he says to the rock, 'I was made/For you', he is doing no more than accepting that 'this was all there was to it'." If there is any redemption or transcendence in the final poem it must be of a kind that can be restated in the terms of that line. Their suggestion would, in other words, bring into balance the two halves of Hughes's imagination, his modern, existential awareness of the "boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness" and his recovery of the ancient, religious sense of the universe. It is constructive criticism of this kind that makes the new study by Gifford and Roberts an essential reading for anyone seriously interested in the work of Ted Hughes.

Criticism is a discipline that seems to hold little appeal for Ekbert Faas and Stuart Hirschberg. They prefer to rest on biographical and psychoanalytical speculation, as if that absolved them from any further exploration of the poems. They seem drawn, not so much by myth in Ted Hughes, as by the myth of Ted Hughes.

Peter Redgrove

This is a pity, because Faas's book is promising to outline, he does, for instance, offer a historical perspective, although when he cites Hughes as being alone among contemporary

English poets in his "departure from the mainstream Western tradition" one can only assume that he is unfamiliar with the work of Peter Redgrove. Faas prints as an appendix a selection from his forthcoming edition of Hughes's critical writings: the problem is that the appendix makes for better reading than the book. Faas's text is often no more than a thread drawn hastily through too many quotations. In the course of these rapid summaries Faas tends to become glib, thereby devaluing Hughes's currency.

There is one point, right at the end of the book, when Faas takes a line from a conversation with Hughes and follows it up. The result is a useful exploration of the relationship between the South Indian *vacunas*, which Hughes had been reading in A. K. Ramanujan's translation, and the lyrics of the Epilogue to *Gaudete*. If only Faas had ventured more often on his own account, he might have written a much better book. His two interviews with Hughes (the first published in the *London Magazine* in January 1971, and both now printed as a second appendix here) are of unusual interest, and his edition of Hughes's critical writings will be invaluable. The sadness is that once that edition is out, his own book will cease to be of any value.

Hirschberg is rather more apposite on the hermetic and alchemical background. It is useful, for instance, to know that "the dark night of the soul" through which the alchemist had to pass began with a stage known as *caput corvi*, crow's head or raven's head. This illuminates *Crow*, and also *Cave Birds*, where the hermit sentence, is swallowed by a raven. Or again, in their discussion of *Cave Birds* Gifford and Roberts are unable to see the point of the "Bride and groom" being placed "Like two gods of mud/Sprawling in the dirt": they might have seen the point that they know that "lying in the mud" is an equivalent stage in the Orphic cult. Hirschberg quotes one of the Orphic hymns in which the initiate feels as if his heightenedness has caused him to be "shut up in a cave... I am likened to the black raven, for that is the wages of sin: in dust and earth I lie."

Gifford and Roberts are clearly more at ease with Hughes's esotericism in the material world than with his interest in the world of spirit. In this respect they are subject to the limitations of their time, and in this one respect Faas and Hirschberg do retain a certain usefulness. They are rather like the scholars of a century ago: they can be unreliable, even misleading, but they do offer glimpses of material not generally available to the modern reader. What Hirschberg really should have done, and might still care to do, is simply present a Companion to the poetry of Ted Hughes, a selection of plain texts drawn from folklore, myth and the occult, that would enable the reader to establish his own relations between Ted Hughes's sources and what he has been able to "make new" in the poems.

On myth, his avowed theme, he is not so much a guide as a computer point-out of every conceivable reference. He does not stop to examine whether his references point in the same direction as Hughes's poem. To the final image of "Prometheus On His Crag," for instance —

And Prometheus eases free,
He sways to his stature,
And balances. And treads

On the dusty peacock film where the world floats.

— he adduces, in rapid succession, the proverb "proud as a peacock", the story of Argus and Io, the peacock as an image of cyclic renewal, and various fables where the crow disgorges itself as a peacock. So Prometheus "subordinat[es] his pride" by treading it underfoot and achieves renewal, though only as "part of a larger cyclic transformation from Crow through disguised Crow back

to Crow again". All of which ignores the image itself, which is, surely, primarily a visual image, of oil floating on water, and so an image of instability, transience, illusion, with suggestions of the veil of appearances, the solipsism of the seeing eye. It may well be that Hughes is taking a traditional image of renewal — Hirschberg might also have adduced, from his alchemical section, the appearance of the rainbow colours, called the peacock's tail, in the alchemical vessel, which marked "the final stages in the process of self-becoming" — and totally reconstituting it to suggest the fragile and illusory nature of that renewal. That would be characteristic. In which case Hirschberg should have used his references to highlight Hughes's individual treatment. Whereas in fact he has not even noticed it: he prints these lines without their linebreak, thereby destroying the verse movement and what that movement suggests, the uncertainty of Prometheus's step and the instability of the "ground" beneath his feet.

Hirschberg is rather more apposite on the hermetic and alchemical background. It is useful, for instance, to know that "the dark night of the soul" through which the alchemist had to pass began with a stage known as *caput corvi*, crow's head or raven's head. This illuminates *Crow*, and also *Cave Birds*, where the hermit sentence, is swallowed by a raven. Or again, in their discussion of *Cave Birds* Gifford and Roberts are unable to see the point of the "Bride and groom" being placed "Like two gods of mud/Sprawling in the dirt": they might have seen the point that they know that "lying in the mud" is an equivalent stage in the Orphic cult. Hirschberg quotes one of the Orphic hymns in which the initiate feels as if his heightenedness has caused him to be "shut up in a cave... I am likened to the black raven, for that is the wages of sin: in dust and earth I lie."

Gifford and Roberts are clearly more at ease with Hughes's esotericism in the material world than with his interest in the world of spirit. In this respect they are subject to the limitations of their time, and in this one respect Faas and Hirschberg do retain a certain usefulness. They are rather like the scholars of a century ago: they can be unreliable, even misleading, but they do offer glimpses of material not generally available to the modern reader. What Hirschberg really should have done, and might still care to do, is simply present a Companion to the poetry of Ted Hughes, a selection of plain texts drawn from folklore, myth and the occult, that would enable the reader to establish his own relations between Ted Hughes's sources and what he has been able to "make new" in the poems.

The bard of Briggflatts

By Fleur Adcock

CARROLL F. TERRELL (Editor):
Basil Bunting: Man and Poet
427pp. Maine: National Poetry Foundation. \$25.
0 913032 51 1

Basil Bunting once said "There is no excuse for literary criticism"; these words are quoted, usually with nervous jocularity, by several contributors to this volume. It does not consist entirely of literary criticism: there is a lessening of biography, another activity frowned upon by Bunting ("My autobiography is Briggflatts — there's nothing else worth speaking about"), and also some short extracts from his own prose writings and from two bibliographies. But for the most part the homage offered to the poet by this somewhat mixed gathering of his admirers is in the form of analyses of his work.

Bunting was eighty last year, and his birthday was celebrated in this country by readings, television programmes and a festival in his honour at the University of Warwick. The publication of his *Collected Poems* by Oxford University Press in 1978 brought him back to the notice of his own countrymen (a process which had already begun with his "rediscovery" by Tom Pickard in the 1960s), but the reputation of "the only card-carrying English Poundian" as Donald Dave had called him, was only a few years' head start on the other side of the Atlantic. Recently his work has also been seriously examined in this country, and not only by Americanists such as Eric Mottram: *Agenda* has devoted attention to Bunting, and he has a strong following in his native North East England, as is proper. The present collection of essays is of predominantly American authorship, but includes a substantial British element.

The book follows the pattern of a similar volume on Pound's other disciple, Louis Zukofsky, published in 1979, and was conceived and produced in uncomfortable haste. (Why? The birthday is well past, and no other particular occasion looms.) Carroll F. Terrell's chinty and at times incoherent preface refers to publication within a year of the initial decision, and continues hopefully "As with the Zuk book, the work of the writers here speaks for itself, but does not show the deadlines many of them met which cannot be described as indulgent". Perhaps not: the clearest signs of agitation appear in the prose of Terrell's own introduction, which scuttles frenetically from one tired metaphor to the next, sometimes tripping over several together: "It takes time, as does a fine wine, for the poet's acknowledged land to be developed in crisp and unblurred lines". But possibly he writes like this even at leisure.

The tone of the actual contributions to the book is for the most part more controlled, partly because existence there are two articles from the 1978 Bunting issue of *Poetry International*, two extracts from an essay by Hugh Kenner from *Poetika*, and some of the other contributions incorporate, or rely upon, work which had already been done. Nothing is included from the special issue of *Agenda* devoted to Bunting in 1978, but its contents are listed and summarized in the second bibliography.

The book begins with a section on "The Man" (as distinct from "The Poet", "The Thinker", and "The Translator"). The life about which Bunting professes such reluctance to write is, in fact, a varied one: a Quaker background; imprisonment as a conscientious objector; a job as a music critic; a spell in Paris in the 1920s helping Ford Madox Ford on the *Transatlantic Review*, among other things; friendship with Pound; several years in Italy, at Rapallo, and year or two in the Canary Islands; some experience of sailing various kinds of boat; war service in Iran on the basis of the classical Persian Bunting had taught himself in order

to read Firdusi; an appointment as Vice-Consul in Isfahan, and later the post of Chief of Political Intelligence; and then years of drudgery for the Newswatch *Evening Chronicle*, which enabled the poet to support his wife and children but dented his creative impulse, until his "resurrection" in the 1960s.

Terrell has patched together a narrative of these events in what he calls an "eccentric biography". It is based on several not entirely compatible sources, including Bunting's conversation with Jonathan Williams published in 1968 as *Descent on Rawley's Madrigal*; long extracts from this are stitched in between passages of paraphrase and conjecture, using such expressions as "we can deduce what happened" and "the evidence suggests" and "probably". In view of Bunting's hostility to investigations of his private life, and the smokescreen he has thrown up around it, it would possibly have been better simply to reprint the Jonathan Williams interview, which at least had his grudging cooperation.

The sketch of "The Man" is continued by a lively and sensible piece by Hugh Kenner, part reminiscence and part insight into the work, and a brief burst of homage from Theodore Enslin; and then attention passes to the poetry. The centrepiece of this section is a "Symposium" on *Briggflatts*, Bunting's major work and the one without which, in spite of his earlier achievements, he might indeed have remained in a literary limbo. Like his earlier long poems, which he called "Sonatas", its basic structure is that of a musical composition, and he has constantly stressed the importance of this element in his work. (In his own reading of *Briggflatts*, recently issued on a record by Bloodaxe Books, Scarsdale, he is accompanied by a piano, as an accompaniment to the recitation of the poem.) But its verbal content, notwithstanding Bunting's tensing assertion that the "attempt to find any meaning in it would be manifestly absurd", repays close attention. *Briggflatts* is not an easy poem — it is condensed, allusive, and occasionally seems almost as deliberately puzzling as its author's public utterances about it can be; but it makes sense: it is not merely a texture of interesting tonal effects. L. S. Dembo, in an essay whose initial purpose is to argue against Peter Dale's rather unpleasant *Agenda* article, "Basil Bunting: the Quaker and Griggle School of Poetry", analyses aspects of both subject-matter and sound-patterns in *Briggflatts* and puts a convincing case for the poem's carefully integrated unity of theme, M. L. Rosenthal is equally illuminating, but less polemical.

Donald Dave aims his fire at Michael Schmidt, who in a hasty reading of *Briggflatts* has mistaken "Rawley" for the name of the bull with which the poem opens, and listed the qualities embodied in this actually anonymous animal; Dave advises him and English readers not to hunt for symbols but to approach the poem without prior assumptions. This sermon is directed at the same category of sinners as Dave's earlier article "English and American in *Briggflatts*", but says rather different things and, as we might expect, says them well. John Peck, on the other hand, writes in somewhat polemical terms about the influence of the "heroic sagas", as far as one can gather; and Anthony Suter repeats points made in his other writings on Bunting.

Outside the "Symposium" *Briggflatts* receives attention in several more general articles. David M. Gordon's "The Structure of Bunting's Sonatas" is somewhat given to musical technicalities and to hypotheses — "would have", "seems to", "it discusses *Briggflatts* in the light of Bunting's diagrammatic representation of its form as a small range of variously shaped 'mountain peaks'. Peter Quartermain analyses rhythms and patterns of vowels in Whitman, Pound and Bunting, showing how much harder the mouth of the speaker has to work in the latter, "moving around all those vowels, voicing all those consonants". This is indeed one of the most remarkable features

of Bunting's verse, which needs to be read aloud in something approaching his own carefully liberated manner. "Music" in his poetry does not mean mellifluousness, as Hugh Kenner reminds us in his analysis of a few densely-packed lines.

Bunting has called his shorter poems "Odes" — a word which implies musical connections once again. The only sustained consideration of them here is in the first of two extracts from a thesis entitled *Music and Meaning in the Poetry of Basil Bunting*, by Sister Victoria Marie Forde, SC. This is a workmanlike study, making use of a wide range of sources, and as an introduction to the themes and background of the Odes the chapter is helpful, though a little more than an introduction (it extends quotations make it look longer than it is), and only one poem, "Vestiges", is discussed in depth. Certainly some of these shorter pieces are apprentice work, too slight or derivative to merit weighty examination, but there are also some fine and durable poems among them, which deserve fuller treatment.

A few of the Odes are in fact translations, and Sister Forde discusses these in the second extract from her thesis. Like Pound, Bunting saw translation as one of the chief activities by which a poet learnt his craft. His scholarship is genuine, and although the translations he has prepared are few (they fill only twenty pages of the *Collected Poems*) his stylistic range is impressive. They include a fine, spare version of Horace's *Elen fugaces*, a number of translations from the Persian, a language in which he is very much at home, and some adaptations from the Italian — among which can be included the long poem *Chionel at Toyama*, based on an Italian translation of a twelfth century Japanese prose work. Sister Forde examines them all, giving particular attention to *Chionel at Toyama*, which she places high among his work. She displays an informed understanding of what is involved in the translation of Latin poetry, particularly that of Horace, and is perceptive about sound-values and metres. Of the Persian translations she finds one (from Manicheism) imperfectly successful because of its strict adherence to the original. Marvin Lohr and Glyn Fuesting, however, in an article reprinted from *Poetry International*, see this meticulous fidelity to his Persian sources as the result of Bunting's desire to bring an unfamiliar literature clearly before English readers, whereas with Latin he can afford to be more free.

The rest of the book is given over to "The Thinker" and "The Testament", as if a saint or the founder of a sect were being honoured. Under the first of these rubrics fall two selections, by Dale Reagan and William S. Milne, of "Obliter dicta" from Bunting's own prose writings, lectures, interviews and letters. The extracts from his criticism illuminate his own poetic practice and assign credit to his masters — Villon, Malherbe, Wordsworth, Homer, Dante, the Persian poets Firdusi and Manicheism.

"The Testament" consists in fact of two bibliographies, one by Dana Wilde of works by Bunting himself, and the other by Roger Guedalla, as the introduction to the book confesses, although this fact is not mentioned at the head of the bibliography itself, and one of works about Bunting, with summaries of the more important articles. This is by one of Terrell's graduate students, with a little suitably acknowledged help from here and there; it is by no means comprehensive (it does not include book reviews, although poems addressed to Bunting are solemnly listed), and the criteria for inclusion are not defined; but the fairly long annotations are useful.

There was room for a comprehensive critical study of Bunting, but this patchy compilation is not it. Perhaps someone with more time than Terrell seems to have been able to spare, and slightly more discretion, will be inspired to do better.

Demonstrations of versatility

By Frances Spalding

MARCO LIVINGSTONE:

David Hockney
215pp. with 185 illustrations 36 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £7.95. (paperback, £3.95)
0 500 181853

Beneath the glamour and promotion associated with David Hockney's name is a driven worker with a capricious imagination whom few critics have treated seriously. The lack of critical literature on the artist, who has been working now for twenty-five years, is indicative of the art world's distrust of popular appeal. To be a commercial success and accessible runs counter to concepts of the avant-garde. There is also the suspicion that the light cannot be profound. It is ironic that only now, when the iconoclastic misfit has turned establishment guru, is he being objectively rated.

Marco Livingstone's book fills a similar role to that of John Berger's *Success and Failure of Picasso*; it exposes weakness as well as strength, and will help stem excessive eulogy. His impartiality is impressive and must have involved skilful diplomacy, for in a monograph on a living artist the author is necessarily dependent on his subject's goodwill. Outspoken criticism is combined with keen appreciation and a ready grasp of the art-historical allusions called by Hockney from various periods and cultures. Marco Livingstone never pushes his analogies too far, except when unlikely precedents for the portly Henry Geldzahler are found in the Madonna enthroned and in Jacques-Louis David's "Madame Récamier". He rarely questions the underlying ideology in Hockney's art, but it is not so strictly formalist as to avoid discussion of its human content. He brings Hockney's career up to date, and throughout combines subtlety and precision of statement with the ease and clarity that the series demands, making this a monograph of value to layman and art audience alike.

If Hockney's image has begun to lose its sheen, his fascination has increased because the problems that he tackles have become more real. His central weakness is the one which Berger pinpointed as Picasso's: he cannot always find a subject to match to strength his versatility and skill. Picasso's 1960 Tate Gallery exhibition acted as a major liberating force. It showed Hockney that style was a thing to be chosen at will, according to the needs of the subject. Two years later, when showing four works in a *Young Contemporaries* exhibition, he chose as a generic title one that applies to his whole career — "Demonstrations of Versatility". As with Picasso, this

talent has encouraged experiment but has occasionally become unhooked, making its own motions its subject. Discussing his tendency to fall back on naturalism, Hockney confessed to Peter Fuller, "I obviously have just terrible weaknesses as an artist". This recent cracking of his glib panache has revealed more doubts and hesitations than the suspiciously ingenious autobiography, assembled from taped conversations in 1975, suggested. We now learn that throughout the greater part of the 1970s Hockney suffered from painting "blocks". Despite his readiness to expose his private life in book, paint and film, he has produced few self-portraits. He argues that if he looks at himself too closely, the innocent on whom much of the charm of his vision depends will disappear.

The autobiography told the reader just what Hockney wanted known about his paintings. Marco Livingstone is able to add still more information regarding source material and production, but his most important new contribution is his detailed examination of Hockney's theatrical designs which, since 1974, have been a significant aspect of his work. Having earlier criticized certain early 1970s paintings for being emotionally and intellectually shallow, Livingstone admits the fresh challenge presented by the more ephemeral art of the theatre but does not draw out the contrast between that artifice provided Hockney with a welcome and safer avenue.

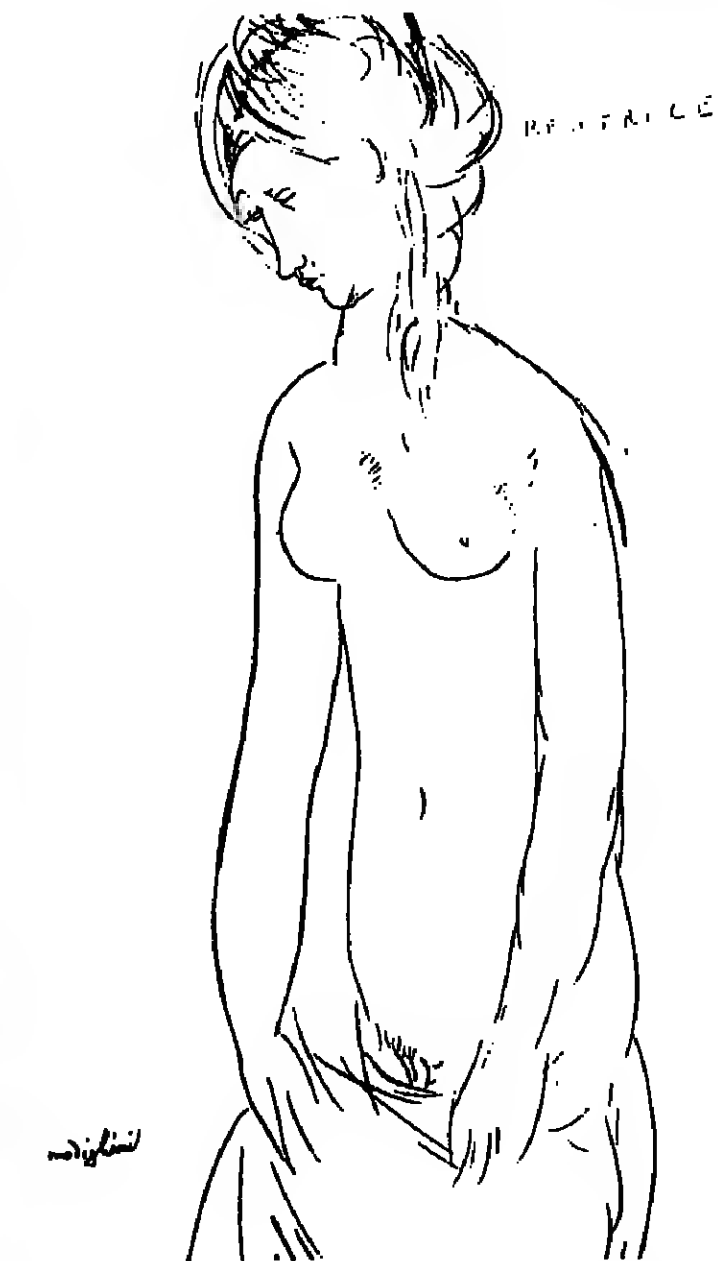
Looking at the designs for *The Rake's Progress*, it is tempting to draw a parallel between the rake's gradual dissolution and Hockney's development. The most exciting images in this book — those still buoyant, owing to their quirky originality, cheeky humour and throw-away style — are the paintings produced at the Royal College and immediately after. "In those days I didn't talk much," says the man who recently reduced Bernard Levin to silence in an interview. Instead, he buried furtive messages in canvases that make an agonized exploration of his homosexuality. He now admits that he would like to recapture their sense of urgency. His various experiments with medium and style look increasingly like a search for spontaneity, for an apparent freedom in his early work when in fact freedom was the one thing he had not got. Soon after he "came out" he seems temporarily to have lacked a subject. He played with modernism, filling his canvases with pictorial devices and conceals. Only his wit, Marco Livingstone argues, saves these pictures from becoming drily pedagogic.

Unlike the rake he was undone not by extravagance and sexual excess, but by a penchant for travel and for the camera. His move to California resulted in images of sun, affluence and leisure, with which his name will for long be associated. Already these have a period look. They often disappoint in

actuality but reproduce well, because colour reproductions return them to the medium from which they were composed, with detail reduced and crisper presentation. The wit and tension in the portraits depends on his compositional acuity and clever placing of the figures. Often, however, likeness and setting suffer from inattention, as becomes evident if the "Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy" is compared with the photographs, here reproduced, of the two men and the room in which they were sitting. Yet Hockney could easily have become the John Singer Sargent of the 1970s had he not, except in one instance, refused to paint commissioned portraits.

The camera, he has admitted, led him into naturalism and to the impasse this eventually presented. But this difficulty was surely compounded with a sense of rootlessness. His misfortune was now his freedom, his ability to go where he wished. For all their modish elegance, his drawings done in hotel bedrooms convey vacuity, as well as loneliness and isolation. Moving to Paris in 1973 for two years, he was confronted with the work of major French artists and must have reflected still more on his own limitations. In Picasso's breadth and generosity he found an indictment of the self-imposed narrowness of much contemporary art. Confirmed in his demand for a more humanistic approach than modernism allowed, he made a bold stand with Kitaj in *The New Review*, calling for a return to a figurative art filled out in "memorable and generous terms". Yet the large painting he began after this and worked on for two years, his "Santa Monica Boulevard", he recently destroyed.

Like Ingres, Hockney may come to be admired chiefly for his portraits and drawings. Both author and artist agree that the outline drawings done in pen and ink are Hockney's greatest achievement. His line is brittle yet tender, exploratory yet affirmative, conveying with extreme economy the maximum of information. They are also intensely felt, unlike certain of the coloured crayon drawings. In Paul Helleu, in which Marco Livingstone discovers "an irritating air of self-congratulation". A similar facility seems to mar his recent "Canyon" paintings which were the subject of conflicting opinion when they were exhibited in *A New Spirit in Painting* at the Royal Academy (Commentary, January 23). Livingstone praises these and other of Hockney's recent works, finding in his new canvases on themes of music and dance a liberating eclecticism that makes them the logical successors to his Royal College paintings. Hockney himself is convinced these represent the start of the most productive and inventive period in his career. This from the man who in 1977 admitted, "But I have not been successful at all yet: not even a glimmer".



A charcoal drawing (1915) by Modigliani of Beatrice Hastings. Poet and critic, socialist feminist turned militant anti-suffragette, Beatrice, the South African-born daughter of a prosperous businessman, is reputed to have married a boxer called Hastings before becoming the mistress of Alfred Orage, whom she helped to edit *The New Age*, and the friend of Katherine Mansfield, who she was later to cruelly dismiss as having "uttered her way out of a world she had found". In 1914 she began a tempestuous affair with Modigliani who made a number of studies of "in *poesie nuptiale*". Mordant of flesh as well as wit, Beatrice soon equalled the drink and drug-induced physical aggression of the painter. She killed herself in Worthing in 1943. This drawing is taken from Modigliani by Bernard Zurcher (£3.95, 0 413 47690 1) which is included in series of Methuen paperback books on art which have been translated from the French. Other volumes (all at £3.95) are Toulouse-Lautrec by Joseph-Emile Müller (0 413 48220 0), Van Gogh by Frank Elgar (0 413 48240 5), Rousseau by Frank Elgar (0 413 48230 8) and Modern Painting by Joseph-Emile Müller and Frank Elgar (0 413 48230 8).

Pagan, problematical

By Jean Wilson

ROBERT B. PARTLOW and HARRY T. MOORE (Editors):

D. H. Lawrence: The Man Who Lived Papers Delivered at the D. H. Lawrence Conference at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, April 1979
302pp. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
0 8093 0981 5

These twenty-seven essays honouring Harry T. Moore are variable in quality, but the best are a valuable contribution to Lawrence studies. There is too heavy a concentration on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and while I am sure readers are delighted that Professor Moore's biography of Lawrence is being made into "a major motion picture", but is an academic book the place to announce it (twice)?

The most interesting papers are those relating to the new Cambridge University Press edition of the complete works. Lawrence's "literary executor", Gerald Pollinger, offers a fascinating exposition of the status of Lawrence's estate. Some notion of Mr Pollinger's expertise as a literary agent may be gathered from the fact that his definitive edition is to be regarded as new copyright, thus ensuring a further fifty years' income for Law-

rence's heirs. Michael H. Black details the difficulties, principles and practices involved in establishing the text, and Michael Squires particularizes the problems to be faced and detective work needed in dealing with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Of the critical papers Keith Cushman's claim that the stones in *England, My England* are all examples of "revisionary mythmaking", with their bases in classical mythology, is interesting, and Sandra M. Gilbert is fresh, lively and controversial in her attempt to define the fundamental paganism of Lawrence's poems, while James C. Cowan writes of Lawrence's use of the Christian mystery of resurrection as a symbol for the liberalization of his characters into sensuality. The three other good papers are all devoted to *Women in Love*: Charles L. Rosa's careful examination of the development of Lawrence's treatment of homoerotic feeling through the various drafts of the novel; Lydia Blanehard on brotherhood and sisterhood, balancing both male and female "chauvinist" views of the work; and Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunisela on the use of the myth of Eros and Psyche.

The lack of a unifying theme rather detracts from the book's value, and in the tributes being paid (rightly) to the work of Professor Moore, it is a pity that only the last contributor finds space to mention F. R. Leavis's championship of Lawrence.

Citing the "r" in Ezra

By Rupert Christiansen

ALAN DURANT:

Ezra Pound, Identity in Crisis
A fundamental reassessment of the poet and his work
206pp. Brighton: Harvester Press.
£18.95
0 7108 0036 3

Literary criticism is always searching for new metaphors, means by which to restate a relatively constant series of facts and opinions. Those who don't like the metaphor in question will shout "jargon", while those who do, mutter "discourse". Alan Durant's "fundamental reassessment" of Pound's work uses the terminology of Lacan, who believes that the unconscious is structured like a language and who has radically reformulated the Freudian theory of infantile sexuality. The clinical validity of Lacan's ideas

is not the issue here: what matters is their potential for producing a rich and suggestive literary criticism which can help an ignorant or befuddled reader understand more fully what is being read. The simple fact is that twentieth-century poetry is peculiarly vulnerable to psychoanalytic exegesis in so far as its aesthetics have largely renounced the need for a degree of immediate comprehension: also, as Durant tortuously explains in relation to Pound, it frequently displaces conventional expectations of a poet's persona. Lacan is additionally seductive to the critic because his prose is allusive and cantatory, and because he himself uses literary metaphors such as "metonymy". This does not mean that his theories of language and the unconscious will necessarily clarify Pound's *Cantos*.

Durant's particular aim is to find in Pound's Language(s) some explanation of, or parallel to, his political views — to show how Fascism was "a likely spin-off from his discursive practices". Predictably, we trail through endless sexual images and the dominating phallus is hunted out of

every crotch and cranny. Mussolini's included. The results, apart from being contentious (I like the cited critic who believes that "r" is the sound of the phallus) appear totally divorced from Pound's immediate social experience and historical situation. More generally, Lacan seems to lead Durant to forego any possibility of the poet's intelligent self-knowledge and creative will: we are back at the deterministic idea of the poet writing passively, a victim of neurosis. For example, Pound's prolongation of the *Cantos* becomes "the effect of an intellectual repression of the surplus agencies of language", while a cluster of associated images is interpreted as "a compulsion to repeat in a constant cross-crossing of signifiers".

In the terminological circumstances, the book is lucidly written and there is an interesting discussion of Pound's use of Fenimore's book on Chinese script. But as it is, one falls with relief on the quoted passages of Pound — not only the poetry, but also his marvellously forceful, pithy and witty writing about writing.

Intellectualizing the popular

By Roderick Beaton

GAIL ROLST:
Theodorakis
Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music
262pp. Amsterdam: Inkert.
91 256 0795 U

Theodorakis: Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music begins with the suggestion that Theodorakis may be "one of the most important figures of twentieth-century music" — an assessment which is perhaps wisely not repeated in the book's conclusion. The comparison with Bartok and Stravinsky which this judgment immediately implies, and which is often made explicit in the book, is both invidious and inappropriate. For all their absorption of the native rhythms and tonalities of an "exotic" folk music, Bartok and Stravinsky worked within the tradition of Western European art ("classical") music, and it is in terms of that tradition and its development that they have an evident importance today. Theodorakis early in his career chose to turn his back on that tradition, preferring to enrich the non-Western musical tradition of his country with something of what he had learned at the Paris Conservatoire, but much more with his enormous and spontaneous gift for melody.

For historical reasons Greeks have never either assimilated the "classical" musical tradition of the West nor developed an alternative "classical" music of their own. But the Greek musical tradition, encompassing the music of the Orthodox Church in Greece, a wide variety of regional folk music, as well as an urban folk tradition in which Western and Middle East influences create a unique mixture, all Greek music is essentially "popular" — but it is often of far greater quality and complexity than the popular music of the West, where music has become polarized into "popular" and "art" traditions.

There are good grounds for claiming Theodorakis, along with other talented Greek melodists of the 1960s and early 1970s, as "classics" of Greek music. The "new wave", as it was called in Greece, which began in Greek music around 1960 was a remarkable phenomenon. What Theodorakis himself, in a foreword to Gail Rolst's book, calls "intellectual popular music" emerged almost from nowhere, linking without pretentiousness or triviality the verses of poets who were later Nobel prize-winners, with popular music of great beauty and subtlety, and almost incidentally bestowing on Greece a completely new "national" musical instrument in the four-stringed bouzouki.

The role of Theodorakis in the rise and the almost equally spectacular decline of the "new wave" in Greek music has yet to be clearly defined. It is perhaps a pity that Ms Rolst, in her almost exclusive focus on the personality and music of Theodorakis, tends to present his contemporaries and fellow-musicians in the guise of rivals, to whom she tries to be fair, rather than as collaborators on a common venture. Rolst seems content to repeat the view of George Giannaris, whose *Mikis Theodorakis: Music and Social Change* was published in 1972, and of Theodorakis himself; that the new musical climate of the 1960s was almost solely the work of Theodorakis. There is quite a discrepancy, however, between the lyrical simplicity of the lyrics of Theodorakis, Hadzidakis and Xarhakos among others in the early 1960s, and the often naive and bombastic statements of intent of Theodorakis's published writings. It was certainly not the "metaphysical music" of Theodorakis's proclamation which changed the face of Greek music in the 1960s, and only one "metaphysical" work has ever achieved widespread recognition. This is Theodorakis's setting of the *Axion Est* of Elytis, arguably his master-

piece, a brilliant but uneven work which remains *un genre*.

The dominant personality and prolific output of Theodorakis may have partly simplified and obscured more complex musical events. Certainly it is a weakness of Rolst's book that in her examination of Theodorakis's fall from popular favour she fails to consider the fate of the musical movement with which he first won that favour. The "new wave" had spent itself shortly after 1970. Contemporaries such as Hadzidakis and Xarhakos turned with varying degrees of conviction to exploring new styles, while younger figures such as Markos Vamvakos, Savopoulos and the impressive Christodoulos Haralis have all developed in directions of their

own, so destroying the cohesiveness that had marked the decade before.

Gail Rolst's book follows a biographical plan, and inevitably repeats a good deal of material already available to the English-speaking reader in Giannaris's book and in Theodorakis's *Journals of Resistance*. Unfortunately, in doing so she omits any discussion or explanation of what she rather loosely calls "Byzantine" music or of the tonality and rhythms of Greek folk music, the few examples which do illustrate Theodorakis's debt to tradition being reproduced from the manuscript facsimiles in Theodorakis's own *Moniziki via its Mazes*.

Finally, a word about politics. It

was the dictatorship of the "colonels" in Greece from 1967 to 1974 that raised Theodorakis to international fame as a figurehead of resistance. During those years when his music was banned in Greece, a smuggled cassette or a record clandestinely played was undoubtedly a symbol, to many besides those on the Left, of absent freedom. It was certainly a moving experience to hear Theodorakis's music in Greece at that time, and it was probably the recent memory of those years, rather than enthusiasm for Theodorakis's new works such as the cacophonous up to 30,000 people to the football stadiums to hear them in the first months after the composer's re-

turn to his native country.

Much has been said and written about the musician who was a member of Parliament and an organizer of resistance to the colonels, and Giannaris and Theodorakis himself have written excitedly of music influencing politics, society and the course of world events. Ms Rolst, despite her title, seems less certain. Theodorakis served for less than three years as an MP. And even in 1974 when his popularity was at its height after the fall of the dictatorship, the Greek voters seemed disinclined to connect music to politics: millions flocked to hear his concerts and bought his records, which had just been released from censorship, but he was not re-elected to parliament.

The divine concourse

By Wilfrid Mellers

The Complete Works of John Dowland

Recorded by Consort of Musick, directed by Anthony Rooley

The First Booke of Songs 1597

DSLO 50K (2 records)

The Second Booke of Songs 1600

DSLO 52K (2 records)

The Third Booke of Songs 1603

DSLO 531 (2 records)

A Pilgrimes Solace 1612

DSLO 585 (2 records)

Mr Henry Nowell Lamentations 1597/Psalms and Sacred Songs

DSLO 551

A Musical Banquet 1610

DSLO 555

Lullabies 1604

DSLO 517

Consort Music

DSLO 533

A Miscellany

DSLO 556

Keyboard transcriptions

DSLO 552

The complete lute music

D 187 DS (5 records)

Decca/Oiseau Lyre.

John Dowland is the greatest of English song writers: a bold claim with which few on reflection would quarrel. He is also the greatest English composer for the lute. If that is a less bold claim because the field is circumscribed, one might step it up by saying simply that he is the greatest composer for the instrument. However one rates him, there is no doubt that Dowland is an ideal subject for the currently fashionable "complete recording". There is enough of his music to make the undertaking impressive, but not so much as to make it impractical; his output is of consistently high quality so there is a minimum of dross to be borne with in the interests of comprehensiveness; his musical character is clearly defined.

Dowland was an Elizabethan whose art, like Shakespeare's, came to fruition in the time of James I. We think of him as the supreme exponent of "Jacobean melancholy", and recall the wonderfully apposite fact that he was for a period lutanist to the Danish court at Elsinore. But Anthony Rooley's new recording of Dowland's oeuvre with his Consort of Musick for the Florilegium series issued by Oiseau Lyre, is on the whole a reminder of us of the emotional range of Dowland's work; and in demonstrating, through the performances, how Dowland's Hamlet-like introspection is consummated in an equilibrium of negative and positive forces. His post-Renaissance Platonism, poised between the divine and the civic, to use the contemporary terms, naturally bears on styles of performance. In the five books of ayres the music stems from private passion of considerable intensity, triggered off by words that are often poetically potent; but the spontaneity, with which lyrical phrases flow from rhythmic interplay of the guitar-polyphony, lute, part. The latent polyphony prompted Dowland to arrange songs of his solo ayres as

four-voice settings, and to conceive some of his subtlest work in his last collection, *A Pilgrimes Solace*, specifically in that form. These harmonic-polyphonic ayres, in which each line has the intimate relationship to a poetic text such as characterizes the solo ayres while being simultaneously part of a dramatically harmonic texture, are probably Dowland's supreme achievement. Significantly the poems are mostly devotional; religious experience is "personalized" as personal experience is spiritualized.

I began by thinking that a more passionate awareness in these performances of Dowland's Hamlet-like intensities would have made his ultimate physical-metaphysical equilibrium more impressive. Emma Kirkby's exquisite voice and the high intelligence of her response to words don't give her the right weight for Dowland, except in the more Italianate, elaborately ornamented masque songs, of which her performance is as near perfection as seems humanly feasible. Even David Thomas, a truly great singer of seventeenth-century music, tends to dampen the ardour of his superb voice more than seems to me necessary; the tenor, Mervyn Hill, comes closer to a fusion of vocal vibrancy with empathy, while paying deference to the implied polyphonies of the delicately

sensuous lute. Yet as the ayres slowly unfold through the five books Rooley's approach seems justified. There is no single track here that moves me to tears as do Pears's version of "I saw my lady weep" or Deller's of "In darkness let me dwell" — both of which are no doubt unauthentic. Yet a noble spirit and a visionary world are cumulatively evoked, until as climax "spiritual madrigals" of *A Pilgrimes Solace* are magnificently performed, every vocal and instrumental strand offering its humanistic individuality to the divine concourse of the whole.

Of the discs devoted to instrumental music that of Dowland's major consort work, the *Seven Passionate Pavanes* on the Lute, his most famous song then as now, was the first to be recorded, and suffers most from a deficiency of that basic earthiness which makes levitation at once more miraculous and more believable. There's not enough corporeal pulse to encourage the polyphonies airily to wing, so the effect is muted; though what the players aim at is right in principle. The five discs of lute music, on the other hand, are continuously delightful and inspiring. No fewer than five lutanists contribute, all of a technical competence inconceivable at the time I was first interested in this music, when lutes tended to cavort

like bucking broncos. Moreover, the five players exhibit a variety of approach appropriate to the range of the music. Rooley himself, who self-effacingly restricts himself to minor pieces except for the sublime *Farwell*, and Jacob Lindeberg play with a musical discretion always at the service of the music, allowing body-rhythms lyrically to flower. Nigel North is more poetic, less rhythmically secure but subtle in nuance and timbre; Anthony Biles is technically brilliant though mannered; Christopher Wilson, the most adventurous player, sometimes loses pulse in relling in rubato and ad hoc ornamentation, though his "late" style is wonderfully persuasive in the mysterious "Forlorn Hope". In the keyboard transcriptions Colin Tilney preserves, on the "mechanized lute" which is his virginals, much of the plangency and plasticity of the lute-plucked instrument; the minor consort pieces always enliven and sometimes deeply move us.

All the music is ideally suited for playing to ourselves in a private rather than public place. Though his mood is hermetic, his healing therapy is hardly less relevant to, and perhaps more needed by, us than it was to and by those who made it, when "our" world was first in labour.

Relative ruminations

By Gerald Abraham

PIOTR ILIYICH TCHAIKOVSKY:

Letters to his Family

An Autobiography

Translated by Oalina Von Meck

577pp. Dennis Dobson. £17.50.

0 234 77250 6

Tchaikovsky — or Chaykovsky as I vainly prefer to spell him — must have been one of the most voluminous of all letter-writing composers. The Russian collected edition of his letters begun in 1959 already runs to 4,839, with one more volume, covering the last ten months of his life, still to come. One wonders how in thirty years he found time to compose eight symphonies and nine operas, to say nothing of concertos, full-length ballets, chamber music and much else. He was not one of the world's great letter-writers but he is always very readable, gossiping about his own music and other people's, on books read and plays seen, on his travels and troubles. And like all good letter-writers he reacts to the personality of his correspondent, though this is naturally less evident in a selection all addressed to close relatives. So one welcomes a volume of them in a serviceable, but far from immaculate, translation. (The famous mezzo Minnie Hauk appears as "Minnie Oger" and even French words are correctly spelled by the composer as mis-spelled here.)

The history of the publication of Tchaikovsky's letters is curious. Long excerpts from many of the

family letters and those to Nadezhda von Meck and others appeared in his brother's three-volume biography of 1900-2. Other small collections of correspondence with Balakirev and Tanev followed, but scholarly publication began in 1934-6 with the three volumes of correspondence with Nadezhda von Meck edited mainly by V. A. Zhdanov, who gave Nadezhda's letters as well as Tchaikovsky's. Zhdanov followed the same principle in the first volume (1938) of correspondence with Tchaikovsky's most important publisher, Jurgenson. Next he turned to the family letters with P. I. Chaykovsky. *Pis'ma k rodimim*, 1850-1879 (1940). The war intervened. Zhdanov returned to work with the Tanev correspondence (1951) and the second Jurgenson volume (1952), but he abandoned his original "family" series. Instead, in 1955 he brought out a selection of 681 *Pis'ma k blizkim* and it is this selection that Gailina von Meck has translated, with no mention of Zhdanov and without his seventy-six pages of valuable notes (though she borrows from them, also without acknowledgment) for which the "additional annotations" by Percy M. Young are a very poor and incomplete substitute. To take one example: how many readers of letter 216 will realize that *Grande Duchesse*, which Tchaikovsky had just seen, was Offenbach's *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*?

Curiosties in the publication of Tchaikovsky's letters are revealed in the Russian editions themselves. In his 1940 volume, Zhdanov printed some very frank letters of September 1876 in which the composer confes-

sed among other things that

There are people who do not despise me for my vices only because they began to love me when they did not yet suspect that I was actually a man with a lost reputation. [This is true, for instance, of Sasha (his sister). I know that she guesses everything and forgives everything. You can imagine how terrible this is, for people to blame me and forgive me, when actually I am not to blame for anything! And isn't it an appalling thought that people dear to me are sometimes ashamed of me? But it has been so a hundred times in the future. In short, I should like to marry or enter into an open liaison with some woman to save myself and the mothers of temptable gossipers, whose opinion I do not value in the least but who can hurt those near to me. . . . I am so confirmed in my habits and tastes that it is impossible to cast them off like an old glove. Besides I am far from possessing an iron will and since writing to you I have already given way three times to my natural inclinations.

In 1955 Zhdanov omitted these letters altogether, so that the rather important confessional passages do not appear in letters to his family, which is absurdly claimed to be "an autobiography", though they were published in English nearly forty years ago. As for Russia, in 1961 N. A. Viktorova and B. I. Rabinovich published the letters in volume VI of Tchaikovsky's *Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* but omitted the confessional passages.

The generations of expansion

By D. K. Fieldhouse

ANGUS CALDER:

Revolutionary Empire
The Rise of the English-Speaking Empires from the Fifteenth Century to the 1780s

916pp. Cape. £16.50.
0 224 01452 8

"How can one write the history of the English-speaking peoples and their empires?" asks Angus Calder in his introduction. The question would have been sharper if he had added "as a single continuous narrative", for that, in effect, is what he set out to do and what presents the greatest technical and conceptual problem about a book of this kind. A hundred years or so ago, of course, J. R. Seeley, founder of the modern concept of "imperial" history, saw no difficulty. For him *The Expansion of England* implied a study of how and why England emerged from the rack of those European states which had been involved in the first colonization of the new world to become, by his day, the greatest imperial power. He could construe a single central theme. England had triumphed because she was "least hampered by the Old World". Keeping her eyes firmly on her overseas interests, while her European rivals involved themselves in continental struggles, England had grown into "Greater Britain". That was her destiny, the "pregnant" essence of her history. The linear past stretched unbroken into the future.

Such unities and certainties are not available to modern historians. Too much has been written on the expansion of Europe for them to see any easy single answer to the basic question of why Britain became the leading imperial power; and the end of empire in the twentieth century has destroyed the notion of ultimate destiny. Moreover imperial history can no longer be seen as unitary, flowing from a single central situation. It was

not just England, but Scotland, Wales and Ireland that were responsible for empire-building; and the energies and activities of British people overseas — colonists in America, traders, soldiers, slave-traders, missionaries and speculators on other frontiers — can take as much responsibility for the process of expansion as the actions and policies of the British at home. Equally important was the part played by non-Europeans — Indians, Amerindians, Africans and others. So, in place of a single, simple, coherent outward thrust by the English, we now see a vastly complicated process working in both ends, centre and periphery, in which the pull was as important as the push and circumstance as decisive as intention. It is, then, still possible to attempt to write a single narrative history of the British empire? Where could one discover its unities?

Dr Calder is all too aware of these problems. His title suggests a central theme: that this was a different sort of empire whose character was, in some sense, "revolutionary"; and one expects it will provide a unifying concept. If this was intended, it is impossible to discover what this revolutionary element was, or what distinguished the British experience from that of other European imperial states: one is no wiser at the end than at the beginning. One thing simply seemed to follow another. But then we do know a great deal about what happened between the early sixteenth century and 1783, both in Britain and the overseas possessions. Calder's style of narrative history is to divide his three-hundred-odd years into a series of short periods, each lasting about a generation. Like the individual frames in a cartoon, one period seizes dissolves into the next, creating the illusion of continuous movement. Within each frame he surveys situations and trends in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, correctly seeing Celtic tendencies as England's first colonies, and then describes developments in each area of overseas activity.

The virtue of this method is that it creates a strong sense of chronology. Contemporary events fit into a coherent historical situation and suggest their own logical outcome. Atmosphere is created by a multitude of deft descriptive touches and descriptions of individuals which is sometimes reminiscent of Jan Morris's style. So, almost imperceptibly, the empire evolves before our eyes until, during the generation after 1760, we come to the supreme paradox of British imperial history: the contemporaneous loss of the first empire in America and the founding of a second British empire in south Asia. At this point the book stops abruptly, to be continued in a second volume which will take the story, including that of the newly born United States, down to 1865.

To the professional historian a book of this kind presents problems, though it is clearly not written for him. One reaction is to stand amazed and humbled at how many hooks its author used in writing it, how much fascinating detail he has built into it, how well the story is told and how buoyantly it carries to 800 pages of text. Another is how well Calder has understood and used the great mass of specialized material he studies, very seldom appearing to slip into factual error, to accept a discarded interpretation or to show ignorance of controversies surrounding its material. It is, in fact, difficult to think how, or by whom, such a task could have been better done.

Yet, in the end, one has to face the question: was it worth doing? What is the use of a compendious history of this kind? Does the act of pulling together a multitude of separate histories and comprehending the work of so many specialist historians (for that, in effect, is what Calder has had to do) add anything important to the existing record? At times one doubts it. The material on English history at the start of each century is so short and selective that one sniffs distortion. Nor do these snippets of information appear, in general, to throw much light on the

roots of overseas expansion. Then there are recurrent abbreviated narratives describing, for example, two centuries of fighting and injustice in Ireland. The uninformed mind boggles at the apparently shapeless edifice and flow of conflict and alliance between O'Neills, O'Donnells, Maguires and the rest and wonders why they need to be chronicled here. Surely it would have been wiser to exclude such necessarily over-compressed narratives of British regional history, including that of Scotland and Wales, except in so far as they help to explain overseas expansion? This would have enabled Calder either to make the book much smaller or, alternatively, to carry the story much further, perhaps to 1914, in this volume. It was obviously impracticable to write a "total" history of the English people, at home as well as overseas; so these putted domestic histories, unable to stand by themselves, were an obvious candidate for excision.

How, then, might the book be used and by whom? Brilliant and evocative as much of the writing is, few "general readers" are likely to sit down to read it in a stretch. Weight and length ensure that it will be put down frequently. Could it be used as a textbook by, say, sixth-formers or undergraduates? One might, conceivably, advise a student to work through it as a general introduction to subsequent study of, say, British colonization in America or India. Used in this way, the book could provide a useful general frame of reference and would stimulate interest through its emphasis on the role of individuals and its evocation of atmosphere. But as a basic textbook it would be inadequate as well as too expensive. Even if one jumped from one section to another to study a single region or continuous theme, the sum of the material would be inadequate; one would have to go back to Calder's sources or to more specialized textbooks.

For the more advanced student it must also be said that Calder's loyalty to his preferred authorities sometimes

times results in an unacceptably closed account of still open and controversial topics; see, for example, his reliance on Bailyn for interpreting the underlying forces behind the American Revolution.

So the value of *Revolutionary Empire*, which is considerable, cannot lie in its intellectual architecture nor in the mere information it contains. There is no message. It is not a work of original research. It is unsuitable as a textbook. Its basic weakness, particularly as compared with Calder's *The People's War*, is that it lacks the three unities. What, then, is its strength? It lies in the author's quite exceptional eye and ear for the relevant, the representative, the evocative bit of information. Such perceptiveness is the basic tool of the journalist or raconteur, though here it is supported by sound historical instinct and training. Even the most jaded professional historian can dip into this book at virtually any page and discover something of interest which he did not know or whose significance had escaped him, or an apt quotation which illuminates a well-known person or fact: Warren Hastings's favourite maxims from the Hindu *Gita*; how British redeons remembered the terrible march back from Concord to Boston in 1775; the fact that Scottish Highlanders of the early eighteenth century wore the kilts so short "that in a windy day, going up a hill, or stooping, the indecency of it is plainly discovered". It is this sort of information, culled from imaginative use of a vast range of literature, material which the professional historian usually feels too diffident to use in its raw state, that gives this book its peculiar fascination.

So, in the last resort, this is a book whose parts are greater than the whole, a treasure-house of anecdotal information, a pudding full of plums. It is also a gallery of eighty-one often unfamiliar and relevant pictures. For all this the price is cheap.

Scallywag soldiering

By Phillip Mason

JAMES LUNT:

Imperial Sunset

Frontier Soldiering in the 20th Century

422pp. Macdonald. £15.95.

0 354 04528 8

Even at the zenith of the British Empire, Whitehall was largely populated by Little Englanders. There was not much sense of Roman mission; each dependency was expected to pay for itself; each was responsible for its own internal security and for defence against minor local aggression. Hence, instead of an imperial army there proliferated an astonishing number of local forces, hence — since every colonial government was short of money — continual retrenchment was followed by expansion in emergency.

In this wide-ranging account of eighteen of such local forces, James Lunt has confined himself to those offered by secondment from British regiments, but the range is still staggering, from the Hadrami Bedouin Levy to the Old Cost Regiment, to the King's African Rifles to the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment. It would have been impossible to construct anything like a continuous narrative which could cover so immense a variety and General Lunt has adopted the only alternative course, a series of abridged regimental histories.

But to describe the book in such terms would be insensitive and unfair, because in fact the whole is skilfully knitted together by recurring themes. Young officers volunteered for the Arab Legion or the Somali Camel Corps because they wanted adventure, responsibility,

promotion, better pay — usually in that order. It was a change from garrison life and the long wait for permanent command of a company; it might be an escape from a love affair or from debt; but essentially it was the romantic choice of a man in search of adventure. All true soldiers are romantics at heart; it is not surprising therefore that many of those who went to "scallywag soldiering" when they were subalterns reached high rank. The Royal West African Frontier Force attracted Trenchard, Stockwell, Lathbury, Read, all of whom became full generals or above; both Ismay and Carton de Wiart were with the Somaliland Camel Corps in 1914.

The first theme therefore that runs through these very diverse accounts is the enthusiasm of the officers for a life that was usually uncomfortable and lonely, and often dangerous. The second is their admiration and often affection for the men under their command. Many of them came back for a second spell — the author himself served with the Burma Rifles, the Arab Legion and the Aden Protectorate Levies — but they seem seldom to forget their first love. If a man served first with Africans, he will sometimes later concede that Arabs have many good points as soldiers, but for him there will never be anyone quite like the men of the first company he commanded.

Another theme, implicit but unstated, is the extraordinary readiness of human beings to give life-and-death devotion to officers who take care that they are properly fed and housed and who have the habit of expecting obedience. The 1st Chinese Regiment was raised at Wai-bai-wai in 1898 and was only two years old on April 30, 1900, when turned out without warning in the early hours and marched eighteen

miles to protect from their own fellow-villagers the highly unpopular Boundary Commission which was demarcating the territory the British had just taken from China. But "not a murmur was heard".

It was an economical way of running an Empire, both in money and men. The Sudan Defence Force looked after the internal order of a country the size of Europe (without Russia) with a force of only 5,000 men. British officers were good at getting the best out of ampie men who were not "politically aware". But neither politicians nor civil servants come well out of the scrutiny that such a book as this invites. Burke's saying about great empires and little minds cannot be avoided. There was neither foresight for the inevitable nor a concept of the empire as a whole. As late as 1941,

the Burma Rifles were still being trained for the Libyan Desert, which made no sense in the light of the real threat to Burma and of the miserable pedantry which said that each dependency must be self-sufficient. Not only did these forces contribute to the defence of the whole in a major war but they were switched from one point to another in local emergency. The West African Rifles went to Malaya in 1952. They constituted a general reserve which the War Office would never acknowledge. Imperial parsimony encouraged local parsimony, and many of these forces suffered from periods of cheeseparing that must have made it far more difficult for officers to keep up that confidence in the future on which a unit's efficiency depends.

The subaltern's joyous shouldering

Fifty years on . . .

The TLS of July 23, 1931 carried a review by H. Stansford of Volume III of *The Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury* by his daughter Lady Gwendolen Cecil.

There was, however, on occasion Lord Carnarvon's interview with Parnell — on which the attitude which Lord Salisbury permitted his colleagues to take to trouble. . . . He was the head of a minority Government and an election was impending; he had every desire to govern Ireland sympathetically and was ready to make whatever concessions were possible without betrayal of the Protestant minority; on all grounds it seemed worth while to get Parnell's terms from his own lips. But in the last resort the defence of Lord Salisbury's conduct is personal. . . . His failure to forbid the Parnell interview, . . . belonged to an acceptance of independence in his colleagues which was largely inherent in

his character, though he would have defended it on grounds of administrative efficiency. . . . while it may be contended that in this instance the reasons for departing from his ordinary practice should have been conclusive, the personal difficulty in doing so was peculiar. Even had his temper been more autocratic than it was, it would not have been easy for him, by a mere act of authority, to over-ride the departmental decision of his oldest friend in politics, a man with whom he could look back to thirty years of common activities on a status of equality which had only come to an end two short months before.

Perhaps this refusal . . . to adopt a stonk official attitude towards his colleagues . . . giving to each the respect to which he was entitled as an individual, is the final explanation of his more conspicuous.

authority in Cabinet.

It is certainly the explanation of his influence with the Queen. . . . The problem lay in the fact that when Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister the Queen had been nearly fifty years on the throne, had experience behind her . . . and was fully aware of her prestige. She also considered it her duty to remain aloof from ordinary matters of party controversy, but to intervene in matters which touched her responsibility to her people as a whole. This attitude had long affected the conduct of foreign policy and was now affecting the Irish question too. On the other hand, responsibility for action rested with the Government and particularly with the Prime Minister; and as time went on the Queen's insistence on her age, her sex and her loneliness had tended to make this responsibility more conspicuous.

A voice against the Vatican

By J. S. Coventry

RIBERT NOWELL:

A Passion for Truth
Hans Küng: A Biography
377pp. Collins, £9.95,
0 00 215056 5

The trouble with this very informed, informative and well-written book is that it verges on the biographical. With little mention of other theologians who have forestalled or coincided with Hans Küng's ideas, a misleading impression is left of a wholly lone and original voice. And if an author tests his subject with hardly a breath of criticism, he is liable to make the reader, who is unable to be on Küng's side on substantial issues, become somewhat critical himself.

Hans Küng is a very attractive man. He has enormous vitality and stamina. His output has been prodigious. He has raised and vigorously pronounced upon every issue which has been of importance to the Catholic church in a generation. After *Justification*, a strictly theological work reconciling Catholic and Protestant views on the Reformation issue, he told the Vatican Council what it should discuss and how it should set about it in *Structures of the Church* and *The Church*. With a keen pastoral sense he has written, not so much to advance the frontiers

of learning as to make Christian belief alive, intelligible, not something to be apologized for, to the non-specialist reader: which accounts for his (sometimes tediously) didactic manner. He is unreservedly a Catholic and a priest and, particularly in *On Being a Christian* (720 pp), he has excellently fulfilled his vocation and helped (for a theologian) astronomical numbers of readers to bring their faith alive in our time. In *Does God Exist?* (840 pp) he has given a most comprehensive survey of philosophy of religion since this has existed in its modern form, and exactly delimited the grounds - as he sees them - for a positive answer. He fights his critics; he gives no quarter whatever: he shows every sign (it really does seem fair to say) of enjoying the fight. He is quite capable of looking after himself. And his brushes with the German bishops and the Roman authorities have helped rather than hindered, I will not say his sales, but his theological mission.

It is ironic that his worst book, *Infidelity*, caused the most trouble and eventually led to the disciplinary action of December 1979. (It does not do to write a book with a chip on your shoulder: see the truculent Introduction. The same is true of *Truthfulness*.) Küng asks the right questions; he pokes a strong finger into the weaknesses of the doctrine of infallibility. But few critics thought he had produced any answers. And an obvious philosophical weakness embarrassed his

supporters: his notion of "a priori infallible propositions" is philosophically preposterous and misrepresents the Fathers of Vatican I, who said that the persons were infallible and the propositions irrefragable; what they may mean it was not a venture into linguistic analysis sixty years ahead of its time. Rome moved into action against the book on its publication in 1970, as being clearly against the teaching of Vatican I and II, but, having failed to get any straight answers from Küng, eschewed a trial in 1975, because of Paul VI's reluctance to cause divisions in the Church on the understanding that Küng, if he would not recant, would at least pipe down. He was "bound over to be of good behaviour". Not a bit of it. He proceeded to underline objections to the Church's stance on its teaching authority in various publications, and threw in a very critical assessment of John Paul II's first year for good measure. Bully for him, you may say. Worse was to come. In *On Being a Christian* (German edition 1974) Küng, clearly on the side of the resurrection, was evasive on the divinity of Christ and remained so in all the subsequent showers of statements from either side, a far more serious matter than infallibility, but not connected. How reliable has the Church's accepted teaching from the earliest centuries proved to be? Was Küng a liberal Protestant (so Rahner said, in an off moment) reinterpreting Scripture in the light of modern thought, without concern for

the creeds and Church pronouncements that came in between? Never had Roman doctrinal authority been more patient, moderate, tolerant. No bad thing, of course. Neither Rome nor the German bishops ever got an answer to the question they put. Küng objected to the procedures and to the naivety of the questions. He advocated more enlightened procedures. He would be happy to enter on a theological discussion (with suitably qualified persons) in order to advance mutual understanding. Theological questions could only be settled by theological arguments, not by disciplinary procedures. He utterly, and rightly, rejected any suggestion of disloyalty to the Church. At the end of the day he lost his authorization from Rome to teach as a Catholic theologian in a Catholic Faculty. He nearly took the matter to court, but accepted the compromise of retaining his chair at Tübingen, and the direction of the Ecumenical Institute he had built up, outside the Catholic Faculty and immediately under university authority. Could Rome have done less, or is this a whiff of the Inquisition? It has not harmed his reputation as a theologian. He is now more secure in his professional post, and at least as free to speak and write as before.

Neither Küng nor Robert Nowell has faced the basic issue. Bishops, too, can have a passion for truth as they see it. There are at least two sorts of authority in the Church, that of responsible office and that of learning (that of prophetic holiness is

perhaps a third): the former is a conserving role, the latter pioneering. As they cannot be reduced to tension and may at some points clash; and it is naive to be surprised or hurt about it, if they do. If, in the name of intellectual freedom, at no point or in no way whatever may bishops (or church synods) call theologians to order, then it is absurd to mouth the idea that they have an official responsibility for preserving the Church in the apostolic faith: they cannot have any such responsibility, if they are denied any and every means of fulfilling it. Küng was at fault in insisting that his views should only be challenged by bishops if they could refute his grounds for asserting them: that is to reduce the role of bishops to that of theologians. It is very regrettable that the way in which Catholic bishops seek to fulfil their responsibility as guardians of the faith should be made part of the faith to be guarded, so that all the logical and doctrinal anomalies of "infallibility", and a vicious circle, should add their difficulties to an already difficult matter, instead of its being treated as a profoundly important pastoral question: namely, how in this day and age are bishops to fulfil their proper function and responsibility, when blue murder is shrieked if they do anything at all? Küng and Nowell leave the question on the table, and critics of the Küng affair in other Churches have not offered any answer either.

Divine condescension

By Alberic Stacpoole

RODERICK STRANGE:

Newman and the Gospel of Christ
200pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £12.50,
0 19 826718 5

This book joins another respected study of Newman in the Oxford Theological Monograph series, R. C. Selby's *The Principle of Reserve in the Writings of John Henry Newman*. Like the other, it began as a doctoral thesis; it brought Roderick Strange (now at the Oxford Chaplaincy, but then at Oriel College) a D Phil in 1974 under the supervision of Dr Stephen Dessain of Newman's Birmingham Oratory - his only such supervision - shortly before his untimely death in 1976. We can take it, then, that the accumulated experience of "the prince of Newman scholars" has guided the author to the theological foundations of Newman's spirituality. As any good preacher should, and Newman was adjudged the best of his generation, the subject of this study preached Christ first and foremost; yet he never put together a sustained treatise on Christology. Upon the person of Christ, his work covered all of his preaching and writing years, but unevenly, and at various stages of theological development. Fr Strange has here undertaken to turn all that mass of uncoordinated thought into a single treatise.

At first we are drawn to ask whether this can be done; to turn the life thought of a scholar who lived ninety years and wrote through most of them, into a single treatise; the more so when he began his life as a strong Evangelical, moved equally strongly into the Anglo-Catholic persuasion, converted at mid-life to traditional Catholicism, and became in his last days the defender of liberal Catholicism. It is arguable that, no work should be ordered biographically: rather than analytically, other to take into account the changes of mind on many matters; what a subject wrote in 1828 may, in setting and meaning, be very different from what he came to write in 1878. But, probably, Strange is right to order the work analytically. Certainly he has made the task of comprehending it simpler; and we should take into account the fact that Newman was fond of keeping his whole corpus of work in view - and

in trim - throughout his life, the Cardinal in his last days being happy to take responsibility for the earlier utterances of the Anglican preacher. On the whole Newman held to his judgments with remarkable consistency.

Scholars have judged Newman, in his early thirties as he entered the turmoil of the Oxford Movement, to have acquired a remarkably complete grasp of the central truths of Christian revelation, and particularly revelation as it touches the person of Christ. Strange, after his explorations, has found this same early formation of mind and subsequent consistency, so that "an impressively coherent understanding of the Christ of Newman (which) lies at the heart of Newman's spirituality". His Christology stems from "those burning truths which I learned when a boy from evangelical teaching" upon the divinity, atonement, real presence and

communion in the two natures. Newman remained with Athanasius from 1830 throughout his life, publishing his last work upon that great anti-Arian. His study of Christ's divinity began in earnest with a book published in 1832, which placed him in the front of patristic studies: *The Arians of the Fourth Century*. There he set out as his principal theme the *principatus* of the Father, showing the necessary subordination of Son and Word without prejudice to perfect unity in equality. Father is ever with Son; for generation is eternal, not temporal. It is hard for the human mind to hold such seeming contradictions together, though the religious mind may assent to each: "the full number of propositions, one by one, in which, when viewed together, the whole doctrine and mystery consists is the object Newman calls for consideration."

The sufferings of the divine Christ are explored, Newman showing that they only served to intensify the human experience of suffering, since "God suffered in his human nature". The doctrine of the atonement took Newman much longer to explore, partly because it was subjected to his

theory of reserve - it was a mystery "to be adored secretly". The two ideas met in Newman's insistence that the suffering Christ was more than exemplar: "his sufferings must be adored as our atonement, not our pattern."

Newman is seen here working out his theology of divine condescension, of the divinization of man through his relationship with the humanity of Jesus. This is accomplished after Pentecost through the Spirit, sent not to supply Christ's absence but to accomplish his presence, that as a mystical indwelling of Christ in the believer.

There is nothing new to Catholic ears in Newman's long worked-out Christology, except the immediacy, the beauty and the powerful appeal in the way he presented it. The evidence of that remains in Fr Strange's book, a gift for us all.

often reached surprisingly quickly) as precisely that - vague and formless. In this characteristic, at least, one wonders whether TM and "Christian" prayer are as divorced as Mother Mary Clare would have them.

This latter point is scarcely a criticism that could be levelled at Donald Nicholl's *Holiness*. Where Mother Mary Clare draws selectively on one tradition, Nicholl draws eclectically on at least five. It is to be regretted that some of the characteristics of "holiness" and he does so by means of anecdote and vignette, quoting from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu sources, as well as autobiographical material. The result is often astonishingly refreshing and profound; and yet there is also a strong sense of paganism about it all, a suggestion that prayer is really about self-cultivation. "Each person... has to work on himself. No one else can do it for him." And along with this spiritual athleticism (it comes as no surprise to hear that the author goes jogging even when on holiday in the Holy Land) goes an apparent naivety about the role of suffering in the spiritual life. Discussion of this, significantly, is left to the very last chapter, and then with the heavy suggestion that it can be reserved for the day when one is "noised" for it. Mother Mary Clare's *Encountering the Depths* harbours no such illusions.

Finally, it is disappointing, too, to find Mother Mary Clare making some faintly paranoid remarks about traditions of prayer other than the strictly "Christian". "Our danger", she says at one point, "is that we run the risk of drifting into a vague, formless 'prayer' all too... loosely called 'contemplation'. Christian prayer must never be confused with Transcendental Meditation." Of course, Mother Mary Clare is worrying about dangers for *beginners* in prayer here. But she fails to acknowledge that her own prime authority, St John of the Cross, describes the arid prayer of the "night of the senses", a stage, he says, that is

plation, and the love of Christ flows out", so that "giving ourselves unconditionally to God [we make] a space in which divine love can surround the person for whom we pray". But Mother Mary Clare remains disappointingly enigmatic about the metaphysical bases on which this practice of contemplative intercession supposedly rests. Is it deemed (as it seems to be) that the contemplative religious has some special power to shift or intensify this locus of divine energy? If so, how odd if a subject such as this were not abounded in at least some mystery. But one senses that the author is simply making the (misplaced?) assumption that her readership will both understand and concur.

Nonetheless, there are some possible points of criticism. For instance, the author appeals frequently to "the Christian tradition of prayer" as if it were a unified phenomenon (surely a vast oversimplification); and in fact, if I have read her aright, there is an interesting convergence of diverse influences in her writing: the Carmelite St Teresa and St John above all, but with a fascinating admixture from Orthodox hesychast traditions about the positive role of the body in prayer, and also a strongly affective, Christocentric streak which perhaps betrays a more direct personal influence from Gilbert Shaw (author of *The Face of Love* and Warden to the SLG Convent in Oxford in the 1960s). So we have here not one "unbroken chain of spirituality", but an impressive concretion from fairly divergent sources.

Another area in which one would have welcomed more conscious precision is that of the theory of intercessory prayer. It is clear that contemplative prayer, specifically, is regarded as powerful in intercession. "The love of God flows in contemplation," she says, "and this is

Praying powerfully

By Sarah Coakley

MARY CLARE:

Encountering the Depths
Edited by Rnlp Townsend
81pp. Darton, Longman and Todd.
£1.99,
0 232 51510 7

DONALD NICHOLL:

Holiness
156pp. Darton, Longman and Todd.
£3.99,
0 232 514976

In contrast to many of the recent books on Christian spirituality, Mother Mary Clare's *Encountering the Depths* provides the distillation of a lifetime's experience as an Anglican contemplative and spiritual director; and if her mode of expression is at times a little stiff, it is the stiffness of that slightly awesome, ascetical rigour of a former generation, over that of stilted rigidity. Her central themes are familiar enough: that prayer is a "love affair" with God; that it is both initiated and sustained by God and not by pure human effort; that it is not about emotional fireworks but a maturing of the will; that solitude and silence are vital for its growth; and that it in turn is vital for any "mission and renewal". There is nothing strikingly new here; but there is an unmistakable note of authority in Mother Mary Clare's writing, and the occasional, startlingly practical insight or application, that makes this something of a miniature modern classic.

Nonetheless, there are some possible points of criticism. For instance, the author appeals frequently to "the Christian tradition of prayer" as if it were a unified phenomenon (surely a vast oversimplification); and in fact, if I have read her aright, there is an interesting convergence of diverse influences in her writing: the Carmelite St Teresa and St John above all, but with a fascinating admixture from Orthodox hesychast traditions about the positive role of the body in prayer, and also a strongly affective, Christocentric streak which perhaps betrays a more direct personal influence from Gilbert Shaw (author of *The Face of Love* and Warden to the SLG Convent in Oxford in the 1960s). So we have here not one "unbroken chain of spirituality", but an impressive concretion from fairly divergent sources.

Another area in which one would have welcomed more conscious precision is that of the theory of intercessory prayer. It is clear that contemplative prayer, specifically, is regarded as powerful in intercession. "The love of God flows in contemplation," she says, "and this is

commentary

Newt for your comfort

By Harold Hobson

War with the News
Riverside Studios

If Ken Campbell were a director of non-fashionable plays in a theatre on the Left Bank, he would be one of the great names in European drama. But the greatest names can experience shipwreck, and at the end of the first act of his production of *War with the News*, adapted from Karel Capek by Kenny Murray, I thought he was well and truly sunk. I can think of few exhibitions of incompetence as pitiful as those Campbell presents to us in the opening half of his play.

They remind me of Swinburne's admirable comments on his own poetry:

If a person conceives an opinion
That my verses are stuff that
will wash
Or my muse has one plume on her
pition.

That person's opinion is bosh.
My philosophy, politics, free
thought
Are worth not three skips of a
flea.

And the emptiest thoughts that
can be thought
Are mine on the sea.

Campbell's thoughts are that the sea is full of news, amiable creatures who at the Riverside Studios swim in a great tank of tepid water which

they splash onto the audience - especially when the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana jump in to join them, and later when, in a scene of Jules Vernian horror, Enoch Powell, up to his waist in water, and with a mad gleam in his eye, struggles one of them after a terrifying struggle. That is genuine good stuff, but to get to it you have to endure the agonies of the first act, and these are indeed awful, relieved only by the marvellous Mick Lawson's delivery of a speech by the Queen, and a juggling act, simple and inexplicably sad, made by two news just before royalty enters.

There are six television sets at the back of the stage, and on them selected news reports themselves. A decrepit old stone-age man comes on and talks unintelligibly. Then arrive two middle-aged and nearly naked claps, one of whom squirms down and defecates. He does this rather vividly, and calls his companion to examine the product of his exertions. This scene is disgusting, and quite irrelevant to the subject of the play, which is a study, not of a primitive world without luxuries, but of the problems of immigration and violence. But it is better than the old man, for you can at least understand it.

After that, we get discussions of the immigration of news in an American business conference, where their possible economic benefits are discussed, and also in the House of Commons. It is in the Commons scene that the production

sinks to its lowest point. The trouble is not that one can accuse Campbell of partiality, for he deals with all parties with an even-handed injustice that is nevertheless quite good-humoured (though not so amiable as his treatment of royalty, which throughout, though disrespectful, remains enamoured). The misdeeds proceed from the fact that most of the players appear completely unimpaired. There are caricatures of Hattersley, Foot, Thatcher, Muggerside, Heseltine, Paisley, Healey (particularly inept), and several other politicians which would be regarded as incompetent in a third-rate university revue that had been clucked out of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

In this second act all the players, even those who have been so futile in the first, come into their own, and the play gets down to business. In a television interview, Andy Rashleigh's Michael Foot rejoices in the splendid economic success of his new Socialist government, which has introduced a ten-hour week by making news do all the work. But the news revolt, and there is guerrilla-fighting. Terror seizes the British, the American and Soviet governments. The news topple civilisation. There are agonized consultations round Sir Robin Day at the microphone. Chaos grows ever wilder; panic sweeps through the theatre. The actor playing Mr Powell (unidentifiable from the programme) presents a man of intellect and fanaticism, the only politician introduced to us by the play who can rival the great and often terrifying statesmen of the past. He alone shows himself capable of action, and in theatrical terms becomes what the creators of the play's solitary figure of the old heroic and alarming stature.

The ending is superb. Campbell has the gift of uniting slapstick and vulgarity with lyrical tenderness, resignation and beauty. When the news finally destroy our civilization, Malcolm Muggerside and Robin Day (Don Crann and Jonathan Barlow) are left, all else atomized, paddling an inflated dinghy on a piece of black water whilst plangent, yearning, mournful music fills the theatre. Muggerside remains happily confident that God will arrange for the news to make a better job of the world than we have done; Day desperately rows, shattered that England will never be again. It is an inspired scene, absurd, masterly and incapable of rational explanation.

The way it was

By Stoddard Martin

How I Got That Story
Hamstead Theatre

A keen young American reporter is sent to "Amboland" to cover the war between Communist guerrillas and the GI-supported regime of Mme Ing. On his first day he is trying to capture the picturesque atmosphere of a pagoda when a Buddhist priest appears with a petrol can and immolates himself. "I could have done something," the reporter muses; "but that would have been unethical." Mme Ing is not so charmingly naive. "You were responsible for that barbecue," she charges. The reporter protests his blamelessness, but the lady points out that such acts have no effect unless "covered". Later in the play the reporter "goes native" and is captured by the guerrillas. "You have no right to be here," their leader tells him; "we're just a spectacle to you." The reporter protests that he has ever found out by being a reporter: was that "you never find out anything." The

Washed up

By Richard Combs

S.O.B.
Leicester Square Cinema

Blake Edwards struck gold with the *Pink Panther* films, but prior to that he had a penchant for making personal, idiosyncratic and not particularly commercial versions of what, in other hands, would have been money-making candyfloss. Why should his World War I fantasia, *Darling Lili* (starring Julie Andrews, now his wife) not have been as big a success as *The Sound of Music*, or his comedy with Peter Sellers as a madcap Indian film extra, *The Party*, not have been as popular as any other vehicle for Sellers? Or, to reverse the line of questioning, why should Edwards's name on films of such bland gloss as *The Great Race* or *The Tamarind Seed* be taken to add anything at all?

The answer has something to do with the seriousness of his interest in comedy. Technically, his pitfalls have a classic construction, the deadpan insouciance of silent films. But his detached, unemphatic, rather brittle style also encompasses real pain beneath the knockabout, and deceit, betrayal and cruelty in small details rather than big themes. *S.O.B.*, in theory, is the perfect subject for such a director. It is Hollywood on Hollywood, a satire on the film industry in which one expects a self-conscious playfulness, an insider's knowingsness. With Edwards, one also expects the disinterested eye and ear which would lead one to trust an insider's judgement. *The Party* was both classic fustian and trenchant satire, a self-sufficient fantasy about the fantasy of Hollywood life.

S.O.B. begins by succinctly defining itself in those terms. A long opening caption relates, once-upon-a-time fashion, the unhappy fate that has befallen one Felix Farmer (Richard Mulligan, of *Soap* fame), a film producer with an unbroken string of box-office hits, until he made a heart-warming musical called *Night Wind*. It flopped with both critics and audiences. Now plunged into disfavour at his studio, Felix, this preamble concludes, has lost his mind. We then follow Felix, a zombie oblivious to the efforts of friends, family and hangers-on to rectify the disaster, as he shuffles in search of a suitable means of suicide. Sudden Inspiration saves him: reshoot *Night Wind* as a pornographic musical, in

which his wife and star, Sally Miles (Julie Andrews), will have to abandon her Peter Pan image for something more risqué. Negotiations and double-dealing with the studio ensue, but Felix is doomed. All that remains is for his three best friends, a doctor (Robert Preston) and an agent (Robert Webber) to pool what is left of their self-respect and save what is left of Felix from a hypocritical Hollywood end.

The most obvious aspect of *S.O.B.* is that it has, a lot of plot, and a lot of characters who do a lot of talking. Edwards, after all, is not only the film's director but its writer and producer, which gives him more control, and room for indulgence, than poor Felix and his friends ever achieve. Initially, Edwards uses this proliferating material to good effect by creating a kind of double plot. Parallel to Felix's tribulations is the suffering of an anonymous individual who collapses on a bench with a fatal heart attack, crawls for a while in the sand unnoticed by anyone but his bedraggled dog, is washed out by the tide then washed back in again, and finally found to be another Hollywood casualty: a forgotten old actor. The heartlessness (and muteness) of this running gag perfectly complements the craziness (and sententiousness) encouraged elsewhere. The two strands of plot come together in the film's very last shot, in a characteristic moment of sweet black, or jet pink, comedy.

This structural gag aside, much in *S.O.B.* seems out of control; or rather, Edwards's personal spleen often gets the better of his comic distance. The garrulousness of the characters sounds uncomfortably like self-pity. Edwards, who might have been born to deal with this subject, now seems too close to it to see it clearly. The sympathy he extends to Holden, Mulligan and the assorted old hands choking on sour grapes is a lapse not so much of taste as of comic form. The film is at once prickly and pugnacious (unnatural to see anyone or anything in too bad a light) and yet defensive and self-satisfied (the last people the makers expect to see in such a light are themselves). The film's other personal preoccupation - the revamping of Julie Andrews's screen image - also comes to a dubious climax in the transformation of Mary Poppins into a *Playboy* centrefold.

A season of films by Blake Edwards is on at the National Film Theatre until the end of July.

it was. Nor is Vietnam the only place where GIs did "short time" with "little brown fucking machines" while propping up Mme Ing-type regimes: the "lifestyle" continues, in Mme Marcos's country.

This fact perhaps justifies the author's otherwise coy decision to name Vietnam "Amboland". Amin Gray's talents with language and evocation, however, are not enough to obscure his moral lapse in the and. Apparently he stopped writing where his memory of the physical experience of Vietnam broke off. But what of the psychic reverberations of that experience over the following decade? This play wants a third act, exploring the further stage reached by characters like the reporter after optimism and catharsis were passed through. Can it really be that the man thing Gray's generation gleamed from Vietnam was simply that it was "a long, strange trip, man"? Alas, perhaps. Every evening for twenty years, including during that dark period, the great father of American TV, Walter Cronkite, ended his news broadcast with the immobilizing homily: "And that's the way it is."